A History of Kashmiri Literature



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For

Raj Laxmi

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Preface

I am grateful to the Sahitya Akademi for assigning me the project of writing a history of Kashmiri literature. In completing this task I am highly indebted to all Western and Indian scholars who have written on Kashmiri language and literature. I would like to mention in particular Sir George A Grierson for his *Kashmiri Dictionary*, Jayalal Kaul for his erudite essays (*Studies in Kashmiri*), Braj B Kachru for his *Kashmiri Literature* which is scholarly, concise and comprehensive, Shafi Shauq and Naji Munawar for their *Kaashiri Adbuk Tawareekh* and Autar Krishen Rahbar for his *Kaashiri Adbuk Tawareekh (Vol I)*. I am deeply grateful to them as also to Arjan Dev Majboor for his assistance and to all the learned scholars mentioned in the Select Bibliography. I may also mention that I have drawn from my own three books in compiling the present volume.

During the last 800 years of its span of existence, the significant periods in Kashmiri literature have been 1300-1438 (Saint poets), 1550-1600 (Habba Khaatoon), 1700-1800 (Rupa Bhawaani, Arnimaal) and 1800-1885 (*masnavis* and *bhakti* poems) but no prose was in evidence till the year 1940. Similarly literary drama, short stories, novels and discursive prose of all kinds are also only half a century old. Thus this book is mainly a history of Kashmiri poetry, with the last chapter on the birth and development of prose.

My thanks to Mr R.K.Unnithan for having typed the manuscript. I know how difficult it must have been for him to type the Kashmiri transcripts in the Roman script, not being familiar with the language. Thanks also to Mr

Ibrahim Beig for his valued assistance.

Lastly, I would like to mention that the book would not have been completed but for the help I received from my son, Pramathesh. It is his invaluable suggestions and his dedicated involvement in revising and editing the manuscript that alone could bring it to a presentable shape. I owe him a deep debt of gratitude.

Trilokinath Raina

1

The Kashmiri Language

Origin and Development

Kashmiri is the language spoken in the valley of Kashmir and in the adjoining Pir Panchal belt of the Jammu province from Poonch in the west to Kishtwar in the east, and the dialects spoken in this belt are Kishtwari, Siraji, Pogli, Rambani and Pirsi. Kashmiri is recognized as a regional language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution, being the mother tongue of over 40 lakhs of people.

And since this state has the distinction of greater cultural and linguistic pluralism than any other state in India, Kashmiri is a rich and mixed language, reflecting the powerful influence not only of Indian culture and literature but of Persian too. Having borrowed and assimilated words and expressions from a myriad of languages from the beginning, it has a very rich vocabulary.

Being what Emperor Jahangir called the 'Paradise on Earth', Kashmir has always drawn monarch and merchant, scholar and saint, and kept its doors open. But all those who came here to meditate or rule or trade or seek asylum from persecution in their own land (like the lost tribes of Israel,as one legend maintains) came into contact with the people of Kashmir and left an indelible impression on their language.

The history of any language cannot be divorced from

the history of the land where it is spoken and the history of the people who speak it. About the location of Kashmir, it is well known that the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges rose as a consequence of the Continental Drift ages ago. As a result, many mountain lakes were formed. The beautiful Kashmir valley came into being when the waters of the biggest of these lakes called Sati Sar were drained off at Baramulla because of the disintegration of the mountain chain by natural seismic causes (or, as the very popular legend says, by devout prayers of Lord Kashyapa, the father of all Nagas).

The earliest inhabitants were the Nagas who are believed to have descended on the valley when it was formed, most obviously from a neighbouring area. In fact they are co-evals with the lake, as we find in the *Nilmat Purana*, considered to be the Bible on the origins of Kashmir. 'Nag' means 'serpent' as well as 'fresh water spring', both small and lake-size, like Shesh Nag, Kaunsar Nag. And each spring in Kashmir is associated with an outstanding Naga prince or saint. The *Nilmat Purana* is about the great Naga King called Nil Nag, son of Kashyapa. But popular belief apart, who were the Nagas? They were most certainly not Aryans. Various theories have been advanced to explain their origin, but nothing is conclusively established. Were they, with the hooded serpent as their totem, from a race which came to India long long ago from the Mediterranean region and spread and established kingdoms all over the sub-continent? Did they move North from South India, leaving behind Nairs and Nagars? Were they an aboriginal race of the Turanian stock with Taxila as their chief city in India? Were they, unlike Aryans of the 'pure' breed, associated with the linga worship? Or did they belong to Dardistan itself?

Various theories which do not offer us anything to bite at, tempt us to the brink of speculation only. However, as Grierson says, India "appears at that time to have been inhabited by the ancestors of the tribe now found in Hunza and Nagar in Gilgit, speaking the non-Aryan

Burushaki, who were quite probably remnants of the old inhabitants of north western India, driven thither by the arrival of the first Indo-Aryan invaders". (G A Grierson : *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol VIII, Part II.)

One thing is definitely certain; the Aryans were not the first to arrive in India. Other people had come and settled here long before they came. The archaeological excavations at Burzahoma (12 km from Srinagar) give evidence of a primitive civilization of pit dwellers flourishing earlier than 3000 BC. One legend says that people from Ladakh and also from India were helped by Kashyapa to settle in Kashmir. The noted Urdu writer, Sayyed Ehtesham Husain sums it up thus : "Like the Negroes who had come and settled in the Andamans, the proto-Astroloids came from Palestine or the Mediterranean region to Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia and Australia. After them the Austrics came from the Mediterranean region via Iraq and settled in North India. Their dialects are still spoken - Kole, Munda, Santhali, Khasi, Nikobari." (A K Rahbar: *A History of Kashmiri Literature.*)

Soon after, that is about 3500 BC the Dravidians came from the Mediterranean region and Turkey. They settled in India and developed a notable civilization, the substantial evidence of which has been revealed by the excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harrappa. They expanded and mixed with the Austrics and later on also with the Aryans when they arrived. That the Dravidians were not a small or insignificant community is borne out by the fact that those who speak Dravidian languages in India — Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam are more than 8 crores, and are settled in Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which is a substantial chunk of South India.

The Aryans in their southward migration from their original home in Central Asia (Austria, Hungary and the Volga basin are also mentioned in this connection) moved up the rivers Oxus (Amu) and Jaxartes (Syr) to Kokand in the highlands north west of Pamir where the ancient

cities of Samarkand, Bokhara, Tashkant and Yarkand flourish. Here there was a fission. The main body which moved over the Hindu Kush into the valley of the river Kabul and thence to the plains of India are known as Indo-Aryans. Those who were left behind moved into Iran and are known as the Iranian Group. According to Grierson, there was a third group which moved eastward into the Pamirs and now speak Galchah. It is these that got settled in what we call Dardistan, the principal part of which is Gilgit. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Jules Block, George Morgenstierne and Ralph Turner do not subscribe to the view that a third branch of the parent Aryan stock moved into Dardistan in about 2000 BC. This difference of opinion will be very important when we discuss the birth of the Kashmiri Language. This third branch who were the second distinct cultural entity coming to Kashmir after the Nagas were named Pisachas by the Indo-Aryans who drifted there from India later. This was a derisive appellation, meaning an 'inferior race' because it was alleged that they were fond of raw meat.

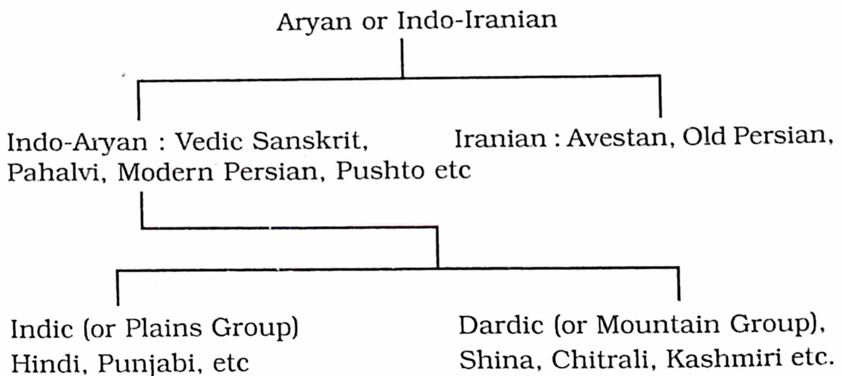
We have mentioned only the first three main significant settlers in the valley - the Nagas, the Pisachas and the Indo-Aryans. In course of time other smaller groups also came, and got absorbed in the warp and woof of the society here.

When the Aryans came to Iran, the language that came into being there was Iranian, the roots of which lay in the old Iranian or Avestan language already existing there, in which *Zend Avesta* is written. When they poured into India, Vedic Sanskrit was born, and a study of the *Rig Veda* shows how close the language is to Avestan. In fact one could call them sister languages, as both were from the Aryan stock. When the Aryans landed in Dardistan, Pisachi — the oldest form of Kashmiri — was the consequence. There are many theories about the origin of Kashmiri. Perhaps the most popular one is that it is Indo-Aryan derived from Sanskrit, like the other languages of India like Punjabi, Sindhi, Hindi, Bengali, Oriya and Marathi. There are others who feel that it is

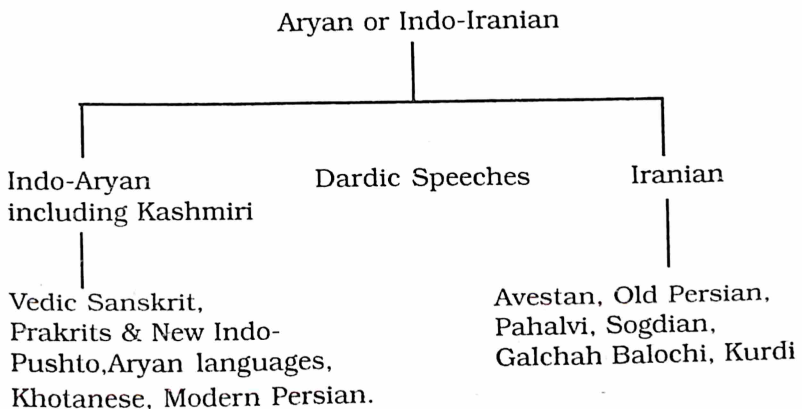
derived from Hebrew born as a result of some of the lost tribes of Israel having come and settled here. Both these theories are based mainly on examining Kashmiri vocabulary to discover words of these 'parent' languages — Sanskrit and Hebrew — having settled there. The third theory, advocated by Grierson, is that when one of the groups of Aryans came directly from Kokand to Kashmir via the Pamirs, they found the Dard group of languages flourishing in this area, viz Kafir, Chitrali, Shina and Dard proper.

The following two tables will make the two views clear:

Chatterjee



Grierson



The first of these two views (Chatterjee's) insists that all the languages that developed in India owe their origin to Vedic Sanskrit, and then they gradually passed through the *Prakrit* (regional dialect) stage and graduated as *Apabramsh* (meaning 'impure') by about 1000 AD.

The second theory (Grierson's) seems to be a more plausible one, i.e. Kashmiri belongs to the Dardic or Shina group of languages which flourished in the area covering Gilgit, the Kashmir valley, Chitral, Kishtwar and Bhadarwah before the Aryans came. And perhaps it is good to step out of the Chatterjee Vedic Sanskrit-Apabramsh syndrome and not forget that a highly organized civilization of which the Burzahoma archaeological excavations have given evidence, existed right in the middle of the Kashmir Valley in and around Srinagar itself, and perhaps the mother language must have been the language of the persons who lived right here. Thus we don't have to look for the roots of the Kashmiri language all over the world.

It is very important to remember that no language has arrived anywhere as a hermetically sealed packet, but has always grown out of the roots of a native dialect. For example Modern Hebrew grew from a semitic dialect of the Canaanite origin the Jews discovered when Moses took them from Egypt to Israel. English grew from the native dialect of the Celts spoken in Wales, Eire and the Scottish highlands. Modern Persian has come from the old Avestan, the language of the *Zend Avesta*, which has some striking common features with the Vedic Sanskrit. And in recent times, Urdu sprouted from the North Indian dialects spoken by the Hindustani troops in the army of the Muslim rulers. That is why it was christened Urdu (the language of the troops).

Now all these languages are very rich, having borrowed words and expressions from all possible languages. But a rich vocabulary does not determine its

parentage. The origin is in the roots, not in the foliage acquired over the years. The Aryans in their expansion south, east and west from their original home fertilized the languages and dialects in each region they passed through. They came into Kashmir from India as immigrants/conquerors, and loaded the language already existing here with a plethora of Sanskrit words, as the Muslims from 13th century onwards brought a treasure of Persian words, and the language continued to be enriched later with Urdu and English words. But the roots of any language are to be discovered in its syntax. These roots in the case of Kashmiri have not changed. They cannot change. It remains thus an Indo-Aryan language of India. Just as we determine the origin of a language from its syntax, its age and consequently its maturity, are determined by the extent to which its conjugation is synthetic. This explains also the richness of the Kashmiri language and its wealth of proverbs and its abundant wit and humour.

Unlike other languages, Kashmiri is not the official language of the J & K State. That honour belongs to Urdu, primarily because there are three languages spoken here — Kashmiri, Dogri and Ladakhi — and since Urdu was the official language of this composite state, it was allowed to continue as such.

Kashmiri is not taught in the schools in the valley. Apart from the fact that it has never been taught in the schools earlier, the primary hurdle in the path was that though Kashmir had attained a certain identity in 1947, no decision on formulating a script was taken till 1971, and the first volume of the Kashmiri Dictionary was published by the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1972. It is only after this that Kashmiri was introduced as a subject for research at the Kashmir University. It is now travelling from top down instead of the normal way from bottom up.

The Script

The story of the script is rather interesting. Kashmiri has never had a script of its own. It was always written in the script of the official language of the day. It happened to be Sharada, a branch of the Brahmi script used for Sanskrit from Kashmir to Kabul right up to the mid-14th century. This script is still used by the Pandits of Kashmir and the Brahmins of Kangra for casting horoscopes. It was the script in which Shiti Kanth's *Mahanaya Prakash* and Lal Ded's *Vaakh* were written. Sharada was replaced by Devanagari for Sanskrit, but in Kashmir Sanskrit itself got replaced by Persian as the official language in the 15th century and the Muslim poets used the new script. Devanagari has however continued to be used by some Hindu poets right upto the present day. Zinda Kaul used it in his *Sumran* and his edition of Parmanand's poetry. One edition of Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor was published in Devanagri. The Delhi journal, *Kaashur Samachar* (earlier *Pamposh*) uses Devanagari for its Kashmiri section, primarily because the readers do not know the new Persio-Arabic script and the *kaatibs* cannot be easily found in Delhi. In 1953, Jia Lal Kaul Jalali, a member of the Script Committee, had suggested Devanagari to be introduced as the official Kashmiri script, but the suggestion was rejected outright by the majority.

The Roman script was used by various Englishmen like Walter Lawrence in *The Valley of Kashmir*, Grierson in his monumental Kashmiri Dictionary, Aurel Stein in *Hatim's Tales*, to mention only a few, and by Kashmiri writers like Saligram Kaul in his *First Kashmiri Reader*. Prof. J.L. Kaul in his *Kashmiri Lyrics*, Prof. T.N. Raina in his *Anthology of Modern Kashmiri Verse* and B.B. Kachru in *A Reference Grammar of Kashmiri*. J.L. Kaul Nazir's recommendation to the Script Committee for adoption of the Roman script for Kashmiri was turned down as unceremoniously as the Devanagari proposal, despite its advantage in typing and printing in view of the fast

disappearing tribe of the *kaatibs* in the Valley.

The Persio-Arabic script *(Nastaliq)* came with Islam. There were no diacritical marks, and each writer wrote his own way. This is also true about those who used the Roman or Devanagari script, each thinking that he handled it better than the others. The only work about standardizing the spellings and diacritical marks was done at the State level after Independence. A Script Committee was appointed with Mr. G.A. Ashai, Prof J.L. Kaul, Prof S.K. Toshakhani and Mirza G.H.B. Arif as members. They prepared text books for schools in *Nasq* (Arabic) script. This was a failure because :

- the script was not known,
- it was difficult to write, and
- the teachers had not at all been groomed to put it across.

It was therefore rejected in 1953, and a new committee of 18 persons appointed, who proposed a new script which was accepted and introduced as the standard script by the J & K Cultural Academy in 1971.

The Earliest Songbirds

Most of what was written in Kashmiri before the earliest extant documents is not available. The manuscripts were perhaps not properly preserved or lost because of fire, flood, sword, recurrent invasions when libraries were deliberately burnt down and monuments razed to the ground. That apart, it is also important for us to know when Kashmiri started being recognized as a living language, when it graduated from the dialect stage though not considered qualified enough for serious themes like philosophy and literature till the end of the 13th century. I might mention a few gleanings from various sources on this subject.

In Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, published in 1150 AD, the evidence that Kashmiri had been a living language is

as follows:

- Certain Kashmiri words like *vaatul, lider, digaam* etc, appear in the Sanskrit text of the history.
- In the 5th *taranga, shloka* No 398, figures the Kashmiri sentence: *Rangalas helu dyna* (The village is to be given to Rangala).
- According to Sir Aurel Stein, in the same *taranga*, there is a sentence which is a translation of the Kashmiri saying : *Nov sheen chhu praanis sheenas gaalaan* (New snow kills the old one).

Kshemendra, a very distinguished poet of the 11th century, who wrote many books in Sanskrit and presented a realistic portrayal of Kashmir, says in his book *Naramamala* (Chapter II): 'Then the master, who was a little intoxicated, entertained them with a composition of his own in the *deshi bhaasha* (Kashmiri).' The same author says in his books *Kavee Kantha Baran* and *Deshopdesh* , 'Poets should write in their own language.'

In about 150 BC a distinguished Kashmiri Buddhist philosopher and scholar, Nag Sen, wrote *Milind Panha* in the standard Kashmiri of that time, which was tinged with the Kishtwari dialect. It is written in the form of a dialogue very much in the Platonic manner. Its translations into Pali and Sinhalese are available, but the original is lost. Some believe it was originally written in Sanskrit and then translated into Kashmiri, and that it presents the dialogue Nag Sen had with the Greek, Menander. Nag Sen, as Hasan Khoihami says, must have used Kashmiri to preach Buddhism. The book was written during the Prakrit Age (500 BC — 1000 AD) when the vernaculars were getting organized as regular regional languages and used for the purpose of propagation of religious thought.

Brihat Katha has the distinction of being the first book written in Kashmiri of the Prakrit Age. The author was the well-known poet and scholar, Gunadhya of the

6th century. It is a book of stories and fables of all kinds, of kings and warriors, of birds and beasts, of fairies and monsters, of human beings and their conflicts. The language Gunadhya used was Pisachi, which was native Kashmiri of those days, and received considerable boost with Buddhist preachers employing it in preference to the erudite Sanskrit. Gunadhya incurred the wrath of the elite for his temerity to use Pisachi, which was considered a lowly language. He suffered a lot and had to burn the book and leave the town. However, the book became quite popular and famous, and was considered a model by well-known Sanskrit poets like Bann and Dandi of the 7th century, and was mentioned as such in all histories of Sanskrit literature. A number of story books in Sanskrit made their appearance - Somdeva's *Katha Sarit Saagar*, Kshemendra's *Brihat Katha Manjari*, Someshwar's *Brihat Katha Shlokasangraha*. The portion that was not burnt was translated into Nepali in the 8th century, but Kshemendra's translation into Sanskrit, though coming at a later date, is considered the best. Thanks to these writers and the mention of Gunadhya's work in histories of literature, a part of the book survives, though only in translation.

Stories have been woven round this author and his master-pieces. One of them mentions that he lived down south somewhere on the bank of the Godavari and wrote this book in Ujjain. But how the South and the Godavari and the Pisachi language are linked together is not clear.

A Kashmiri Pandit family of priests at Bohri Kadal in Srinagar use *Brihas Katha*, which is supposed to be a translation of the saved portion of *Brihat Katha*, for interpreting omens. They have a large clientele of both Hindus and Muslims.

The tail piece in this section is the story of the self immolation of Jayapida's queen. Pir Hasan Shah Khoihaami, in his *Taareekh-e-Kashmir*, relates how this queen, wife of Jayapida, saved a young man who, having fallen madly in love with her, was nearing his end. She

had him brought to the palace, but having sinned in order to save him, she ended her own life. The heroic story of the self sacrifice of the most beautiful woman of that time inspired many poets who strung their lyres to sing about that high-souled woman. These songs were evidently in the spoken tongue, the language of the people and were heard all over the town, and could not remain hidden from the bereaved king, lamenting the untimely demise of his beloved wife. The effect of this monstrous revelation can well be imagined. Mad with rage, he had all books of literature burnt and buried and many poets put to the sword.

This story shows how even at that time Kashmiri was the vehicle of poetic emotion.

2

The Great Mystics

The dawn of Kashmiri literature introduces us to the first thematic and formal traditions of Kashmiri poetry, the Trika Shaivism, which differs fundamentally from Shaivism as a living philosophy in other parts of India. It is a type of idealistic monism, a method of the study of the self's relation to the empirical world. The basic principles are recognition of the 3 significant of the 52 *agamas*, analysis of the 3 concepts of Shiva as God, Power and Atom, how these concepts are embodied and how the metaphysied concepts are classified as *abheda* (non distinct), *bhadabeda* (in the light of distinction) and *bheda* (distinct). This tradition is represented typically by Lal Ded and later (in the 20th century) by Zinda Kaul. In this period we also meet, in this valley of the Rishis, the renowned exponent of Kashmir sufism, Sheikh Noor-ud-din. The *Vaakh* of Lal Ded and the *Shrukh* of the Sheikh are the most effective medium for communicating a spiritual message to the people.

Shiti Kanth

Shiti Kanth's *Mahanaya Prakash* is the first book of Kashmiri poetry that has not come to us through the oral tradition, which is most surprising, as most subsequent compositions of great poets till the end of the 17th Century, like Lal Ded, Nunda Ryosh, Habba

Khaatoon and Arnimaal have been the victims of the oral tradition. The manuscript of *Mahanaya Prakash* has not been changed or modified, so that there are no variants. It was obtained by Buhler and presented to the Deccan College, Pune in 1875-76 and is now in the Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune. In 1918 it was published by Mukund Ram Shastri for the Jammu and Kashmir Research Department.

Shiti Kanth belonged to Padampur (Pampur) and lived and wrote in the middle of the 13th century. Grierson placed him in the middle of the 15th century, saying that he wrote during the reign of Hasan Shah (crowned in 1475) and that he had also to his credit a second publication, *Baal Bodini Nyaasuk*. This book, as certified by the Sanskrit scholar, Nitya Nand Shastri, is a book of Sanskrit grammar written in the 15th century. However, it was discovered that Shiti Kanth, the poet lived at least 150 years before Shiti Kanth, the grammarian. Thus two different persons had the same name, which creates confusion when both the names belong to the distant past, as happened towards the close of the 14th century when Nunda Ryosh and a far lesser writer sported the same name - Sheikh Noor-ud-din. Moreover, apart from the palpable linguistic disparity, theme and the form (*vaakh*) of *Mahanaya Prakash* do not belong to the 15th century, the age of *vatsun*. Shiti Kanth's guru, Jayarath, lived towards the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century. Shiti Kanth's father, Swokha Pandit, was a well-known scholar and belonged to the school of Tantrik Shaivism. And, like his father, Shiti Kanth too was well-versed in Trika Shaivism and the esoteric *Tantrik* doctrine, which is close to *yoga*. 'Tantra' means expansion of the soul to understand the miracle of existence and the meaning of creation. This is also called the awakening of the mysterious *Kundalini*. The title of the book, meaning 'illumination of the highest discipline' or 'the highest meaning of truth through rituals' is an indication in this direction.

Mahanaya Prakash, a mystical and didactic poem, is written in the old Sanskrit style, with each *mantra* or *vaakh* being followed by its translation and commentary, both in Sanskrit, provided by the author himself. There are 94 verses, each a four-lined stanza called *vaakh* with the same metre and rhyme as in Lalla *vaakh*.

This book is a milestone in the history of Kashmiri language. It is for the first time that an author proclaimed that he would use as his medium of communication the '*saarvagenic deshi bhaasha*' and not Sanskrit, the language of the learned. It was definitely due to the growth of *apabramsha*, when the vulgar languages - *prakrits* - were assuming a new shape and maturing into regular languages, but with a lot of unacclimatized vocabulary, i.e., Sanskrit words without any change or with only the slightest modification. As Grierson says, 'It was the time when Prakrit in the *apabramsha* stage just emerged into the language that became Kashmiri of the present day'.

But despite the declaration of its distinct and independent identity, Shiti Kanth used a plethora of Sanskrit words and expressions. Apart from the fact that a fledgling language continues to be dependent on its parent for quite sometime, the nature of the subject made it remain a highly Sanskritized verse.

The second reason is that the author does not think in Kashmiri but in Sanskrit. Thus it remains a mixed language not only because of the hold of the parent language but also because the poet unconsciously wants to convince the reader about the seriousness of his work by appending a Sanskrit translation and by a fair percentage of Sanskrit words in the text itself.

This book does not have any mentionable literary merit, but is of great linguistic and prosodaic interest. It would be right to call it not a philosophical poem but versified philosophy.

In the end I would quote a *vaakh* from this poem along with its reproduction in modern Kashmiri:

Itay ovapleen parampara deepmala zan andakaar damit daam udayet nirantar dishi shapaeyavatu avikaar
(yitshuy avaliyan hanz parampara duupamaala zan andakaaras kaasith, daam nyrantar vwodayas yith avikaar vwopaayich vath deshana yiyi)

Lal Ded

The latter half of the 14th century is memorable both for an unprecedented religious upheaval coming in the wake of the firm establishment of Muslim rule and, for students of literature - the arrival of a new star in the firmament of Kashmiri poetry, the mystic poet Lal Ded who gave Kashmiri poetry its first metrical form called *vaakh*, which she used for the communication of her intense mystical experience. This 'most manly of all women seekers after God' is easily the greatest poet Kashmir has ever produced, and the epigrammatic terseness and unsurpassable imagery of her sayings has made them well known proverbs, so much so that the unlettered Kashmiri does not know that he is quoting her half the time, like the old English lady who, on having a play of Shakespeare read to her by her grandson, complained that the poet had no originality as he was mostly depending on English proverbs.

And the legends that have grown like moss around her name because of the credulity of the devout and as the stock-in-trade of hagiography are supported neither by history nor by the internal evidence of her poetry. Some of them belong to the realm of fantasy which appeals to the crowds - like her jumping into an oven, walking across the river, water lying frozen on her shoulder when the pitcher was shattered to bits, her waxing and waning between two troughs and the two-tub legend of her passing away.

We have no written record of Lal Ded in the 14, 15 and 16 centuries - surprisingly not even in the sequels to Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* by Jonaraja (1459), Srivara (1486), Prajabhata (1513) and Shuka (1586). That is because these were essentially chronicles of kings and narratives of political events, and their scope was limited. Thus we know very little about her life. The earliest mention of her is found in a hagiographical document entitled *Asrar-ul-Abrar* (1654) by Dawood Mishkati. When the first documentary evidence appears about 300 years after a person's death in the work of a nondescript writer, it does not inspire much confidence.

But piecing together such evidence as is offered by her own disciple, Sheikh Nur-ud-din's salutation to her[1], some legends that do not talk about her occult powers - a thing she condemns as jugglery - and have not been elaborated by inventors for 600 years, we have the following facts about her : She was born in the first half of the fourteenth century at Pandrethan. The date is not certain, but there is a consensus that it was around 1335. Her maiden name was Lalleshwari. She was married into a Brahmin family at Pampore where she was given the new name Padmavati. Her mother-in-law, like perhaps most mothers-in-law of bygone days, was cruel to her and almost starved her for years, serving her a big round stone covered with a layer of rice. Siddha Shrikanth, her family priest, was her guru and introduced her to certain spiritual disciplines and encouraged her to read various texts. This preceptor was popularly called Sedha Mol (Father Siddha), a descendant of Vasugupta who laid the foundations of Kashmir Shaivism (Trika) in the 8th century. He is also said to have been a grandson of Shiti Kanth, though this is not more substantial than a legend. That he composed poems can also not be certified, though his verse dialogue with Lal Ded is often quoted. She has referred to him most intensely in the following *vaakhs:*

gworan von nam kunuy vatsun
nebra dopnam andar atsun
suy me Lali gav vaakh ta vatsun
(The only precept my guru gave me
was to withdraw my gaze within.
That to me Lal became the word and the song)

gwara sund vanun raavan tyol pyom
pahali ros khyol gom heka kahyoo.

(The guru bade me lose the world -
a loss that brought infinite pain:
I felt like a shepherdless flock).

She showed remarkable fortitude. The date of her renunciation is not known, but perhaps it happened at a place called Lala Traag where she tore her clothes and moved about alone or in the company of *sadhus*, as carelessly dressed as they. She came to be known as *Lala mats* (mad Lala). But when she communicated her experience to the common people through her *vaakh*, everyone held her in reverence and called her Lal Ded or Mother Lala. When she died is not known, though it is generally believed that the end came in 1376 at Bijbehara.

Lal Ded's poetry is a significant landmark in the linguistic transition from old to modern Kashmiri. It also provides a valuable example of how our language has imperceptibly changed in the course of the centuries. She enriched it with her aphorisms which have become proverbs - very much in the sense in which Shakespeare may be called the maker of the English language. Kashmiri had already reached a certain maturity, despite the fact that it was never the official language, and had offered itself as an adequate medium 'for the expression of philosophical thought'. I would here draw the attention of the readers to T S Eliot's essay "What is a Classic?" where he says that Homer's celebrated epics were possible only because Greek had developed as a suitable medium, nor could *The Aenead* have been possible without Latin

having attained a similar maturity.

Shiti Kanth's failure to move us as Lal Ded does cannot be ascribed to the deficiencies of the language but to his own deficiencies as a poet. And because we do not have any record of what was written earlier than the 14th century because of the ravages of vandalism and time we cannot, as Amin Kamil has rightly pointed out, conclude that nothing was composed or written earlier.

Before we discuss her as the mother of Kashmiri poetry, it is important for us to understand what exactly is meant by a *vaakh*. To put it briefly, it is a sententious, gnomic, 4-lined stanza, complete and independent in itself. The sense seldom runs on to another *vaakh*, except in one instance, though in several cases one *vaakh* is the question and the next provides the answer. Each line is often compact in itself and has therefore compactness as well as pointedness, giving it the edge of a proverb. The metre is accentual, not quantitative, and the incidence of rhymes is not deliberate. I would like to point out here that this refers only to end rhymes, which along with quantitative metre were held in great sacrosanct reverence in the later Persian tradition of Kashmiri poetry. Those who are under the impression that these two have always been inviolable norms in poetry slip unconsciously into the vice of accepting 'technically' correct spurious *vaakh* written centuries after Lal Ded and passed on as Lal *vaakh*. The point that has been missed by almost all critics is that the beauty of old Kashmiri poetry lay in assonance and medial rhymes, and these are to be found in abundance in some of the most moving Lal *vaakh*. Lal Ded was born with a remarkable flair for language and a poetic soul. She did not acquire these things after renunciation. As a girl in her teens she said in casual conversation to a friend :

Hond maarýtan kina kath
Lali nalavath tsali na zaanh

(Whether they kill a ram or a lamb,
Lal always has her big round stone)

This is when they teased her about the dainties cooked at home that day. The two lines are held together by the rhymes *'kath'* and *'nalavath'* and *'Lali'* and *'tsali'*. It is also necessary to correct a certain erroneous belief that Lal Ded was the innovator of this form. This is evident from what she says about her guru's advice:

Suy me Lali gav vaakh ta vatsun
(That to me Lal became the word and the song)

'Vaakh' and *'shrukh'* are the Kashmiri words for *'vaakya'* and *'shloka'*. The disciple would ask the guru or the saint to bless him with a *vaakh* to gain peace that passeth understanding. Those who revered Lal Ded came to her . 'Give us the word', they said. And they treasured what she said and passed it on from generation to generation. But since these *vaakh* of hers have come to us largely speaking in oral tradition, they have got defectively recorded or have gathered variants, being embellished from time to time according to the dogmatic faith of the recorder. It must be said that the 60 verses collected and translated into Sanskrit verse by Rajanaka Bhaskar[2] about 200 years ago were perhaps the only genuine Lal *vaakh* known then. The work done by Sir Aurel Stein, Grierson, Barnett and Sir Richard Temple in collecting these *vaakh* and presenting them to the English knowing public in the 20th century has been laudable indeed.

However, since they have come down to us by oral tradition for over 600 years, they have inevitably been subjects of controversy. Thus adequate discussion and textual criticism become necessary to arrive at an objective decision on correction, rejection and re-interpretation. Sometimes one is faced with a ticklish problem when you find two variants of the same line defended with equal zeal on both sides - for example the

line *'damaadam kormas daman haale'* in Grierson's edition is changed by Mohi-ud-din Hajini to *'dama dama kormas daman aaye'*.

There are some who feel that he has proposed a vastly inferior line in preference to one of the most powerful poetic images of Lal Ded, in an attempt to convince the reader that Lal Ded, being a Shaiva *yogini*, could not have spoken of *'kumbhaka'*. If we could only shift our gaze from the bellows in the smithy to the metal glowing on the flame, we would understand the beauty of the image.

Lal Ded was born at Pandrethan, as legend says,where Ashoka founded his capital, which doubtless must have been a great centre of Buddhist learning. Kashmir Trika Shaivism was a synthesis of various systems of thought and had a powerful impact on the times she lived in. Thus we cannot say that because Trika disciplines are not merely *hathayogic* disciplines, *pranayama* would necessarily have been rejected by a Shaiva *yogini* who had transcended all dogmatic religion, nor does the image necessarily refer to *kumbhaka*. Perhaps the most moving of Lal *vaakh* belong to that period of spiritual purgatory, the period of tension between dying and birth when, as Eliot says in *Ash Wednesday* :

'the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
For the bent golden rod and the lost sea smell
Quickens to recover
The cry of quail and the whirling plover'

I shall quote two such *vaakh* here :

Aami pana sodras naavi chhas lamaan
Kati bozi dai myon meti diyi taar
Aamyan taakyan poný zan shamaan
Zuv chhum bramaan gara gatshahaa

(With loose-spun yarn I tow my boat
Upon the sea. O that my Lord
Heard me and helped me to the shore!
Like water soaking through half-baked plates
My soul is lost. I yearn for home.)

Hachivi haarinji pyetsyuv kaan gom
Abakh chhaan pyom yath raazdaane
Manz baag baazaras kulfa ros vaan gom
Teertha ros paan gom, kus maali zaane

(An arrow of reed for a wooden bow
An unskilled workman and a palace to build
A shop without a lock in the market place
A body uncleansed by a pilgrimage -
That's my state and few would know.)

The *vaakh* are her spiritual autobiography. She trod on the Trika Shaivite path, not as one who gave her intellectual assent to this philosophy but as one who practised what was preached - a religion in its essence, shorn of the dross of shibboleths and totems, complicated rituals, gaga worship, animism, sorcery and *tantras* that had gathered round Shaivism. She did not announce a new creed. She had only great compassion for those among the populace who were misguided by the ignorant priesthood - a sad state of decay which assails all institutional religions.

Some erroneous beliefs about the religion and message of Lal Ded stem from inadequate understanding of both Kashmir Shaivism and Lal Ded's poetry. 'Grierson and Barnett', says Prof Kaul, 'went wrong in interpreting her *vaakh* as if she were a *Brahmavadini* and a *hathayogini* and saying that she recognized that the external world is an illusion...If it is conceded, as it must be, that Lal Ded was a Shaiva *yogini* of the Kashmir school, it must also be conceded that the world to her was not an illusion....'

The mistake is perhaps due to their mis-translation of '*vishyanis samsarnis pashyas*' (the tangled web of *samsara*) as 'the poison of *samsara*', of '*muhuc may*' (love of delusion) as 'love of the world begotten of illusion' and of '*bhavaruz*' (the sickness of the world) as 'the world compared to a disease'. There are many other places where there has been a controversy about the text. Actually there need be none. I would like to quote here Swami Lakshman, the greatest modern authority on Trika Shaivism: 'Shakti is a veiling material that stands in the way of the realization of the Shiva state'. But though her roots were firmly in Trika Shaivite creed, she had risen far above the world of denominations and labels and had become a trail blazer of medieval mysticism in India. Those who followed in her wake are Ramanand (1400-1470), Kabir (1440-1518), Nanak (1489-1538) and (much later) Mirabai, and she was, as they all were, more a saint than a poet, though the excellence of her poetry has remained unsurpassed to this day. The composite culture and thought she preached and the order she founded is an admixture of non-dualistic Shaivism and Sufism. But it is wrong to suppose that she found inspiration in institutional Islam which was endeavouring to replace institutional Hinduism. There is as much substance in this theory as in Prof P.N. Pushp's contention that she was the first 'progressive' poet of Kashmir. She was already a God-realized saint and universally known and revered as Mother by both Hindus and Muslims when Shah-i-Hamadan came (1372), about four years before her death. There is no uncertainty in the *vaakh* :

Shav chhuy thali thali rozaan
Mo zaan Hyond ta Musalmaan
Truk ay chhukh ta paan parzaan
Soy chhay saahibas suutý zaanee zaan

(Shiva resides in every grain
Why talk of Hindu and Musalman ?

If you are wise, know thyself,
For that is knowing God.)

In fact there is a gentle note of reprimand in it. Perhaps this is in answer to one of the learned *Sufis* — maybe Syed Mir Ali Hamdani - who told her that Divine Grace was possible only when one embraced Islam. Perhaps Moulana Rūmi would have given the same answer to a proselytizer enthusiastically flaunting the Hindu or Christian label to him. To understand Lal Ded, it might be of great value to study the mystics about whom there is a written record or who are still living. There is considerable difference — qualitative difference - between the exponent of a great faith like Shankaracharya or Syed Mir Ali Hamdani and a mystic like Lal Ded or Nunda Ryosh or Sai Baba of Shirdi. Our units of measurement belong to one plane and are not applicable to those who have renounced or transcended this plane. And political changes or the arrival of a new band of missionaries are no significant events in the Life Divine.

Nunda Ryosh

Nunda Ryosh, (Sheikh-ul-Alam) the founder-saint of the Rishi Order of Kashmir, followed close on the heels of Lal Ded. In fact he was her younger contemporary and they are the greatest mystic poets Kashmir has ever produced. Their poetry keeps a spiritual heritage alive and has been a perennial source of inspiration to the poets who followed them during the last six centuries.

It is difficult to determine his exact date of birth, but he died in 1438, and there is a strong belief that he was 63 years old when he shuffled off his mortal coil. Thus it is generally believed that he was born circa 1375-77. His name was Nunda Sanz. His father, Salaar Sanz was from a princely Hindu family of Kishtwar, and four generations earlier, his ancestor, Ugra Sanz who was then the ruler, had to flee because his brother rebelled against him . He sought shelter in the valley of Kashmir where the raja

granted him a *jagir* in Rwopavan. After the devastating raid by Zulchu, the Sanz family fell on evil days and lived in dire poverty in the Kaimoh village which is on the bank of the Vishav near Kulgam. At that time an organised band of *Sayyeds* from Iran were on a proselytizing mission in the valley, and the one at Kulgam, Sayyed Hussain Simnani who was a highly revered person, persuaded Salaar Sanz to embrace Islam. He was now Salaar-ud-din. According to the historian Hasan, the person who converted him was Yasman Ryosh, but the poet's evidence in this regard is conclusive :

> His guru was Sayyed Hussain Simnani
> who was then at Kulgam

Soon after this, Salar Sanz married a young widow, Sadar, as advised by Yasman Ryosh, who knew the family intimately. Nunda Sanz was born of this wedlock. He spent his entire childhood at Kaimoh, but was born at Khih, as he himself testifies:

> There at Khih I was born,
> Nunda Sanz, a Musalman.

His well-known homage to Lal Ded establishes the fact that he was born when she was already a famous realized saint. This homage has already been mentioned in the section on Lal Ded.

Lal Ded would have been about 40 when he was born. This was the time of an unprecedented spiritual ferment, with Islam establishing itself as the dominant religion in Kashmir. The whole environment reflected this new activity. More than the traditional proselytizing agencies the presence and activity of *rishis, yogis, pirs, faqirs* and *sufis* exercised a great influence. Born and brought up in this atmosphere, Nunda Ryosh could not but be drawn into the vortex. Not that everybody was

drawn in the same way ; it was only his soul that was susceptible to the conflict of values produced by the new forces. He retired into a cave (Gophabal) at the age of 20 when he resolved to turn his back on family life and normal pursuits of a mundane existence and launch on a career of austerity and meditation. That he had long discussions with Syed Mir Ali Hamadani has been considered impossible for he was hardly 5 years old at the time of Shah-i-Hamadan's third and last visit to Kashmir[3]. Similarly there is not much substance in the legend that he had long sessions with Lal Ded. Maybe when he came out of the solitude in the cave, she was nearing her end or already gone. But she had become a living force for all seekers of truth and he found in her a beacon light. That's what the homage signifies.

The purity and simplicity of his life from the beginning led to his veneration by all Kashmiris. Coarse woollen *pheran*, wooden shoes, conical skull cap worn by the peasants even now—that was his apparel. His food was wild leaves (difsacus and chicory) and very rarely a *roti* of barley. This food and apparel was also used by all *rishis*. All of them also planted trees on the road side and never touched meat. You can't kill life to support life. He planted an elm outside his cave, and it still stands tall and majestic. It would be interesting to mention some of the legends of Nunda Ryosh:

- The most popular is connected with the infant Nunda. It appears he would not suck his mother's breast, which naturally caused great anxiety. Lal Ded, who was passing by, learnt about the baby's unusual behaviour and baring her breasts, suckled him, saying, " Not ashamed to be born, why are you ashamed to suck?" So, in a way she became his foster mother.
- Once he became very gloomy watching people felling trees. When someone asked him why he was sad, his cryptic reply was, *'An poshi teli yeli*

van poshi' (Rice will grow if the forests grow).

- He turned up for a feast in his usual attire, but the person at the gate refused to let him in, suspecting him to be the usual uninvited beggar. He turned up again, properly dressed, but instead of eating himself, rolled down the long sleeves of his *pheran* on the plate and ordered them thus : *'Zethyav naryav, kheyiv saal'* (Long sleeves, enjoy the food to which you have been invited).

Nunda Ryosh had the same spiritual moorings as Lal Ded. Both bear the same message, so much so that during the last six centuries their verses have got mixed, so that it is sometimes difficult to identify them, to say definitely, 'Yes this is Lal' or 'Yes, this is Nund'. Both emphasize the importance of understanding truth shorn of all shibboleths. For both the ultimate reality is formless. Both endeavour to make people cleanse their minds to become fit receptacles of knowledge. Lal Ded lashes out at the ignorant priests and Nunda Ryosh no less relentlessly at the *mullahs* and fake *rishis*. But though Lal Ded does not advocate seclusion and fasting, Nunda Ryosh does believe in spending long periods meditating in the caves, like the genuine *rishis* of yore. And though both use the language of the people and not a learned language as Shiti Kanth did, the theme sometimes makes the appearance of a Sanskrit word inevitable in Lal Ded and of an odd Persian word in Nunda Ryosh. But there is one misconception that both of them were uneducated. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Maybe those who came from Iran felt so about them, because they did not know Persian. However what they convey through their verses establishes them both as the most educated individuals of that age. Nunda Ryosh was the most outstanding exponent of the *rishi* cult — outstanding in the sense that, like Lal Ded, he does not discourse on the mechanism of a theological doctrine, not on what to believe, but on what to become irrespective of the label

you bear. His greatest contribution has been the founding of an order of *rishis.* He chooses this word to remind us that this class of saints who were a blend of knowledge, purity, piety, goodness and selfless service have been there from the earliest times of Indian civilization. He doesn't create a new species but is all praise for those who have upheld the ideals of this honoured fraternity. He gives us the lineage in his very well-known verse:

Awal reshi Ahmad reshi
Doyum reshi Uves aav
Treyum reshi Zulkaar reshi
Tsooryum hazrat-i-Meeraan aav
Paantsyum reshi Ruma reshi
Sheyum hazrat-i-Pilaas aav
Satýmis karham dashna hishi
Bu nai kaanh ta me kyaah naav

Among the disciples close to him were Nasr-ud-din, Baam-ud-din, Zain-ud-din, Payaam-ud-din, Qayaam-ud-din and Shyaama Bibi (also called Shanga Bibi and *Yaavan Mats*). Known to all Kashmiris, Hindu and Muslim, as Sheikh Noor-ud-din, Sheikh-ul-Alam and Sahazanand, Nunda Ryosh, like all great saints did not seek recognition or honour. His was a life of non-attachment. The people loved him immensely during his life time, and he still continues to be the best-loved *rishi* Kashmir has produced. An example of the greatest veneration shown was king Budshah coming as the chief mourner at his death. He died in Rwopavan in 1438 and was buried at Tsrar-i-Sherief. And full 370 years later a coin was struck in his name by the Afghan Governor, Atta Mohammad Khan.

There are several manuscripts entitled *Rishi Naama* and *Noor Naama* dealing mainly with the life, miracles and teaching of the rishi, with his verses interspersed. The genuineness of the verses is difficult to ascertain because of the different versions, and the editor is left

with no option but to examine the internal evidence in the verses themselves. Then there is the additional problem caused by the dispute about the authorship between him and Lal Ded and several others who came much later. The confusion caused by the existence of another poet of the same name at that time has been resolved with the person identified as Sheikh Noor-ud-din bin Lutf Allah, a native of Herat and friend of Timur who also knew Sayyed Mir Ali Hamadani. Moreover, internal evidence points out a different mind, a different theme and a different language. The earliest *Noor Naama* was composed at least 250 years after the poet's death, during which time the language too had doubtless undergone a change. There is thus a need for a serious research to separate the verses of the two great contemporaries and also of those who came much later.

There are two types of poetry associated with Nunda Ryosh — the *shrukh* and *baata bandie*. The latter is essentially the *vatsun*, the form with the fourth line as the refrain used and popularized by Habba Khaatoon two centuries later, which is lyrical and at the same time didactic. The most well known example is

> *Yus kari ghongul sui kari kraav*
> (Only he who sows will reap)

The theme was taken up beautifully by Parmanand (19th century) in his.

> *Karma bhoomikaayi dizi dharmuk bal*
> (Manure thy field of action with the loam of righteousness)

But this is not the form one remembers when one thinks of this poet. The word that is firmly wedded to his name is *shrukh*, just as *vaakh* is firmly linked with Lal Ded. It is 'didactic in content and exhortative in tone,' and in many of them the poet 'speaks of life's

transitoriness and evanescence of pleasure'. The two forms *vaakh* and *shrukh* seem to be the same . Both are four-lined with normally four accents in each line. Both are self contained. Both are from Sanskrit words, *vaakya* and *shloka*. But examined closely, they are different in both content and form. The *shrukh* is most often a moral exhortation, much more than a *vaakh*, which is a statement of eternal truth or the communication of an experience embodying it, and seldom didactic. As Abdul Rahman Rahi says in his incisive critical essay on Nund Ryosh, there is very often in Lal Ded's *vaakh* the presentation of an inner conflict — in fact it is the identification mark of her *vaakh*. You find this poignant presentation also in T.S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*, from which some lines have been given in the section on Lal Ded, Nund Ryosh's *shrukh* do not communicate such an experience as much as the moral lesson that can be derived from it. The figures of speech employed are illustrative and explanatory, and do not become live symbols of deeply felt experience.

The structural difference between the two forms is that the *vaakh* is loose knit and flexible with an accentual metre, and does not necessarily follow a rhyme scheme, though it abounds in internal rhyme. The *shrukh* on the other hand is close knit with a firm metre and a definite rhyme scheme. It seems to be modelled after the quantitative metre, *bahaar* in Persian.

The following *shrukh* would give an idea of his profound thought and excellent command of the poetic medium which undoubtedly make him a dominant force in Kashmiri literature :

Aaravalan naagaraada rovukh
Saada rovukh tsooran manz
Mudagaran gworranditha rovukh
Raaza honza rovukh kaavan manz

(Amid the rocks the found was lost
Among the thieves was lost the saint

Among the ignorant the wise teacher was lost
The swan was lost among the crows)
- (tr. J.L. Kaul)
Akuy khwodaa naav chhus lachhaa
(There is only one God
And he is known by a myriad names.)

Vumur zaanun akuy pachhaa
(Count life as a fleeting fortnight)

Yeeravuni vaatsaas cheeravuni naave
Aavalun vaalima kina laga kuni bathe
(Floating down in a drifting boat
Shall I be sucked in or touch the bank ?)

Nunda Ryosh has remained an abiding influence on all poets upto the present day, some of whom have achieved eminence in didactic poetry. And the Kashmiri language remains indebted to him for enriching it in every way.

Minor Poets

A small manuscript of a *masnavi* (narrative poem) bearing the date 1410 AD has been discovered. The theme is the story of Abraham commanded by God to sacrifice his son. What is significant about this short narrative is that the gradual influence of the Persian vocabulary is evident.

The period of *Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin (Budshah 1420-1470)* will always be remembered for the royal patronage that Kashmiri art and letters basked under for the first time in history. The king was himself a poet (pen name : Qatai) and wrote both in Persian and Kashmiri. Here are two lines from a Kashmiri poem:

Zaavyul kamar aavyul badan shokas chaman zokas chhu ban

Yaaduk sezar raaduk thazar farshas chhu kan arshas chhu thum

He was a lover of song, dance and drama and some of the best artists, like the versatile stage actress, Tara, performed in his time. In fact, one could say that the theatre actually came into existence with Budshah. A number of plays (*paathur*) were written and staged, and were popular. Unfortunately the manuscripts have not been traced so far. He encouraged scholarship, research and all translations. His court was as splendid as Akbar's, with renowned scholars and poets adorning it. They were Mulla Ahmad, Shreevar, Jonaraja, Bhat Avtaar, Yodh Bhat, Baba Shukr-ud-din, Baba Baam-ud-din, Baba Nasr-ud-din, Som Pandit - to name only a few. It was the most propitious time for the development of Kashmiri literature.

One of the courtiers, ***Shreevar***, was statesman, writer and lover of music and dance. He was quite close to Budshah, who had bestowed parental love on him. It is said he was a good poet, but we don't know whether any collection came out. The historian, Fauq says Budshah was so impressed with Valmiki's *Vishisht Brahma Darshan* that he ordered Persian and Kashmiri translations of the book. It is said that the Kashmiri translation was the work of Shreevar. He rendered Jami's *Yusuf Zuleikha* in Sanskrit verse in 1505 and entitled it *Katha Kosuka*. He was a disciple of the historian Jonaraja and the two of them began the monumental work of writing a sequel to Kalhana's *Raja Tarangini*, bringing the history upto date. Jonaraja covered the period 1149 to 1459 in *Zaina Tarangini* and the disciple the period from 1459 to 1489 in *Zaina Raj Tarangini*. Both these were in Sanskrit verse, like Kalhana's work.

Shreevar mentions ***Yodha Bhat***, a Sanskrit scholar who wrote a play *Zaina Prakaash* which reflected Budshah's life most graphically. But the manuscript has not been traced so far. Yodha Bhat's family migrated to

Maharashtra during the period of persecution by Sultan Sikandar, and returned when Budshah had restored peace and harmony in the state. The only name after Shreevar is *Ganga Prashist*, author of *Swokh Dwokh Tsareth*. The theme of this poetical composition is the philosophy of a happy life.

One of the Kashmiri books written in Budshah's time that escaped the ravages of time and is available in Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune is the poet *Bhat Avataar's Baanaasur Vadh Kathaa*. This poet was a great scholar and gifted artist like Mulla Ahmed, Mulla Naadari and Shreevar, and a lover of music like Mulla Jameel. He remembered Jami and Firdausi by heart. The language of *Baanasur Vadh Kathaa* is archaic and heavily Sanskritized as in Shiti Kanth's *Mahanaya Prakash*. It is a long narrative poem, the story taken from the well-known *Harivansh Purana* (a supplement to the *Mahabharata*) of the love affair between Usha and Aniruda, with Krishna as an important character. The poet begins the first part of the poem with an invocation to (praise of) Budshah. He wrote another book, *Zaina Vilas*, the manuscript of which is unfortunately lost, as that of Yodh Bhat's *Zaina Prakash*.

Utha Som (Som Pandit), well-versed in Persian, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pushtu languages, was another important poet of Budshah's time and author of *Zaina Tsareth* (Zaina Charit) in Kashmiri. In this, as Shreevar says, he has narrated episodes of Budshah's life in Kashmiri verse. The book was presented to the king.

Among the minor poets of this period were some of the disciples of Nunda Ryosh. Baba Nasr-ud-din, called 'Sultan-i- Swokhan' (Master poet), made his master's personality the main theme of his compositions. Baba Baam-ud-din (Buma Saad) was also quite close to the master. But perhaps the best remembered is Shyaama Bibi, also called Shanga Bibi and Yaavan Mats (the mad young woman). How she came to Nunda Ryosh and became his most devoted disciple is not really clear,

though we have been fed on various legends. But her elegy on the death of the great master is more memorable than the odd lines of verse composed by others :

Nunda Sanz gav sworgas maato
Asi sanz gav sworgas maato
(Sanz = brave, Nunda Sanz = the master's real name, maato = death, or mad)

Decline and Fall (1470-1555)

With the death of Budshah in 1470, Kashmir entered, after half a century of sunshine under the great king, a century of darkness under the later Shahmiris and all the Tsak rulers. In fact it is wrong to call it rule. It was misrule and oppression. It was a period of steady decline, which accelerated its pace with the dawn of the 16th century. Political stability dissolved in smoke and political adventurism ruled the roost. It was a period of many things coming one after another - the *jagirdars* looting the people, famines devouring thousands, the cities put to the sword and flame by invaders from Kashgar pouring in across the Karakoram, internecine strife and economic disaster. That was the state of the unhappy valley. The only activitiy that went on undeterred was the march of Islam. In fact, King Fateh Shah has to his credit the conversion of 24000 Kashmiri Hindus in his time.

There was practically no literary activity in evidence anywhere. Apart from those who wrote in Budshah's time and happened to be still alive - like the well-known Shreevar who completed his *Katha Kautaka* in 1505 no one was visible anywhere in the literary field except for Ganga Prashist whose book *Swokh Dwokh Tsareth* (Sukh Dukh Charitam) has recently been discovered in the Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune, and the Research Department of Kashmir has acquired a xeroxed copy of it. The language the poet has used is very much like that of Bhat Avataar. The whole poem is an exposition of the

philosophy of a happy life. That it was written during the reign of Hussain Shah (1475-1478) is only a conjecture.

Talking about creative activity of this period in general, Prof. Mohi-ud-din Hajini writes, "There is a consensus of belief today that perhaps *Aka Nandun* must have appeared as a narrative poem for the first time in those days, because when Persian had just made its appearance, local characters and heroes would have had a greater appeal to the popular imagination than those imported from outside, and *Heemaal Naagiraay* or *Bombur Lolur* would definitely have appeared greater symbols of human love than *Sheereen Khusru or Laila Majnun*".[4] The popular acceptance which *Baanasur Kathaa* and *Zaina Tsareth* had in Budshah's time corroborates Hajini's view. It seems stories linked with the *Puranas* and the *shastras* inspired authors to compose narratives in prose and verse with a similar format and with the same verve.

Though there is nothing of substantial merit in the literary work of this period, we can call it a period of transition, which operates as a bridge between the Age of *Vaakh* and the Age of *Vatsun*, though whatever was produced had neither the grace and depth of the *vaakh* nor the romantic fervour of the *vatsun*, because neither was possible in that sterile period.

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1. *Tas Padmaanporuchi Lale*
   Yemi gale amret piva
   So saaninÿ avtaar lole
   Tithuy var ditum diva
   (Homage to Lal of Padmaanpore
   Who drank her fill of nectar
   That yogini was avtaar indeed
   Grant me the same boon, O God !
2. This book is fortunately lying preserved in the Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune.
3. That Shah-i - Hamadan came to the valley thrice is a vague legend. Most writers believe he came only once (Ref. Gulshan Majid : *Naqad - i-Shaar,* p.28).
4. *Kaashir Shaayiri*, Sahitya Akademi, 1960.

3

The Age of Lyricism

(The *Vatsun* Period)

The sunset in 1554 over the Shahmiri dynasty, of which the best remembered king was Zain-ul-abdin (Budshah), and in 1587 it set over the Tsak dynasty when Akbar conquered Kashmir. The great Queen of Song, Habba Khaatoon belongs to the period between these two sunsets.

It is necessary here to analyse the aspects of change consequent on the old order yielding place to the new. On the cultural front, Persian was fast establishing itself as the language of the court, and therefore as the language of the letters and culture, with the result that Sanskrit, which had so far enjoyed this privilege had to step down on all fronts. It was fast ceasing to be the language of the elite. Similarly, Shaivism was already on the back burner and the people sought for other gods, an alternative source of light. The authors now faced a linguistic dilemma. They had to change from Sanskrit to Persian, the former now being relegated to use in almanacs and horoscopes and books of religious ritual. The community of ancient scholars and quill drivers, the Kashmiri Pandits, found itself divided into two — the *Baachhi bata* (those who had to continue the use of Sanskrit) and *Karkun* (who moved with the changing times for a living). One might mention that the best creative work during this

time was done in Persian, like

- The encyclopaedic work of Maulana Sheikh Yakoob Sarfi Ganai.
- Mirza Akmal-ud-din's *Bahr-ul-irfaan*, and
- Khwaja Habib Ullah Nowshehri's treatise on mysticism.

That great poets like Habba Khaatoon and Arnimaal wrote in Kashmiri does not prove that this language had not taken the second place, as one swallow does not make a summer.

Habba Khaatoon

To understand her and the new literary age that began with her arrival, it is appropriate to have a bird's eye view of the times. It was a period of political instability, with the jagirdar busy only in the game of power bargaining. It was a period of economic disaster with one famine treading on the heels of another. The Mughal conquest of the valley was a boon to the suffering of the people, giving them a stable government and economic relief. The last Tsak king, Yusuf Shah, known only because of Habba Khaatoon, did not display any leadership qualities and lost his throne twice, after which Akbar sent him to languish in exile in Bihar.

No authentic biography of the poetess is available anywhere. What has been written about her by various authors is based only on legends, but weeding out the romantic dross that has grown round them, the incontestable facts of her life would stand as follows :

The first three references (Shaayak, Kachru, Khoihami) mention her as a great singer and mistress at the court of Yusuf Shah Tsak who bestowed on her "the honour of sharing his bed". (Which 'honour', however, a king bestows on any maiden he fancies). She was from a moderately respectable family in Pampur which had not remained as affluent as earlier. Apart from being extremely

beautiful, she was as educated as possible for an average girl those days and very fond of singing and composing lyrics (*vatsan*) even at an early age. She was married very young, but the marital bond proved very fragile. When she fell in love, as her poems tell us, it wasn't an unrequited passion. Her reputation as a singer spread far and wide. It is quite possible that she pursued her passion seriously and became a mature and perhaps a professional singer, before being invited and appointed by the king as a regular singer at the palace. Yusuf Shah, well known for what were called his 'sensual delights', would have found Habba Khaatoon with her beauty and her music excellent company not only in the palace but also in his sojourns to the beauty spots of the valley. This phase of Habba Khaatoon's life lasted for five to six years, which was for Yusuf Shah, apart from his sensual indulgence, the most tumultuous period of his life with internecine strife, war with the Mughals and finally imprisonment for life in far-away Bihar. That she had been employed by the king for a specific purpose at court does not mean that a love affair had also sprouted as a logical corollary. If Habba Khaatoon had fallen in love with Yusuf Shah, it would have been reflected in her poetry as frankly, faithfully and transparently as many other excursions of the heart noticeable in her poems.

These six years were thus an interregnum in her career as a poetess. During this period she devoted herself entirely to perfecting her knowledge of music, devising the best tunes for her songs, mastering the classical raagas and composing a well-known raag (*Rast Kashmiri*) herself. This phase ended in 1585 with the arrest and banishment of Yusuf Shah, and Habba Khaatoon was back at Chandahaar and later at Paanta Chhwok where she breathed her last and was buried in 1605.

The Age of Lyricism

In the 16th century we move into a new age of

Kashmiri literature. Mysticism is gradually replaced by human love.The form moves consequently from *vaakh* to *vatsun* (plural : *vatsan)*.

The Tsaks, like their predecessors, the Shahmiris, were lovers of music and dance. There were songstresses and dancers at the court of the Shahmiri kings Bud Shah and Hassain Shah, the most well-known being Ratan Maal, Deep Maal and Nareep Maal, who performed to the music of Persian instruments. And Kashmir did not live in musical isolation. The Gwalior king, Dangar Sen presented many books on song and dance to Bud Shah, and there were 1200 Indian musicians at Hassain Shah's court. In the time of the Tsaks, the saloons of professional singers and dancers (called *hafizas*) became very popular. Equally popular for the laity were the *bacha nagma* (where boys were trained like the *hafizas*) and *baanda paathur* (folk theatre). The music of chang, rabaab and santoor acquired a new identity, with Kashmiri poems set to Persian raagas (called *muquaam*).

This affirmation of life had a natural effect on Kashmiri poetry. A new lyricism was born with a new life and a new vigour. Religious, devotional and mystical verse became a thing of the past, to be revived in the third quarter of the 18th century, except for the forms that had more relationship with the Shia psyche, like the *marsiyas* (elegies) on the theme of the Imaam and Karbala, which began to be written for the first time in Kashmir. It was the dawn of the glorious age of *vatsun* (the Kashmiri lyric) which began with Habba Khaatoon and ended with the death of Arnimaal (1778). Not that the form was new. *Vatsun* means song — the same as geet in Hindustani and lyric in English — and is everywhere the oldest form of poetical expression, as is evident from a line from Lal Ded who wrote 200 years earlier :

suy me Lali gav vaakh ta vatsun
(that to me , Lal, was the word and the song)

It was only revived after a somnolence of over three centuries. Perhaps what helped it to flourish once again was, as Mohammad Amin Kamil says, the restoration of stability with the advent of the Mughals, so that poets and people were no longer hag-ridden with constant fear, when trees blossomed, fields flowered and the weaver went to his loom once again. But it cannot be forgotten that most of Habba Khaatoon's poetry was written before the Mughal conquest and set the tone, inspiring succeeding generations like Arnimaal, Gami, Rasul Meer and Mahjoor to follow in her footsteps. One of her poems *thovnam ruma rumai* was reproduced with a few variations by Akmal-ud-din Beg (1646-1726) as *baali ruma rumai.* Her *Vwolo myaani poshe madano* inspired the modern poet, Mahjoor to write his *poshe mati jaanaano.*

The *vatsun* is a short poem opening with two lines, the first called *hur* (the opening line) and the second *vakhanai* (the refrain). There are a number of stanzas, generally of three lines each, which may have the same rhyme, or the first and third lines would rhyme. Each stanza ends with the refrain as the fourth line, for example: *chhu me baale tamannaa.* In addition, there is internal rhyme, medial rhyme and rhyme at the beginning of the line.

vudri khasun kudur gom
haantsi kami draantsi suutý
kaari vaaynam naara kartal
vwoga pyatha vuchhnamai
shoga laagith boolnam
rogi rogi gom gumai

The theme of a *vatsun* is anything from human to divine love (*bhakti*). It is generally a lyrical conquest of pain and sorrow, in the sense that it is, as T S Eliot puts it, 'both an escape from emotion and an escape from personality'. Or it is jubilation at the sweet moments of life. Traditionally, a *vatsun* is an expression of a woman's

feelings, so that a male *vatsun* writer also speaks as a woman. Naturally, the most moving are those written by women and dyed in the living experience of womankind, viz the episodes of love, infinite longing, the pangs of separation with consequent doubts and suspicions of faithlessness and desertion. You find in a *vatsun* female bashfulness, restraint, simplicity and candour, direct expression, a single mood, not like a *ghazal* moving from sensuousness to mysticism, etc. All this is beautifully interwoven with the beauty of nature, the songs of birds, the language of flowers and streams, and the sighing of the wind in the trees. With lesser poets, this inclusion of natural phenomena has only a decorative value; in major poets it results in powerful imagery imaginatively woven into the theme.

Habba Khaatoon, the Poetess

Habba Khaatoon is the first significant name in Kashmiri poetry after Lal Ded and Nunda Ryosh (Sheikh-ul-Alam). She was the first romantic poetess and the most important *vatsun* writer — a pioneer in this field. Not that she invented this form; she only breathed new life into it. There were many who wrote these songs before the emergence of Habba Khaatoon, but since they were handed down only in oral tradition, there may perhaps have been some poets born to bloom unseen or maybe all of them were of a mediocre calibre. What remained ingrained in public memory was the form. Habba Khaatoon started as a poet very early in her life, being strongly influenced by the living tradition of folk songs. To say, as poet Azad said, that her inspiration came from Persian ghazals is wrong, for *vatsun* and *ghazal* are two separate entities and she never attemped a *ghazal*. Moreover, she didn't become a poetess after going to Yusuf Shah's court; she went there as a finished product.

She didn't introduce any new theme, nor did Arnimaal 200 years later. It would be wrong to say that

before her, only *bhakti* songs were written, like those of her contemporary, Mira Bai. The theme of human love is as old as the hills, so are folk songs. Her themes are ebullience of affection, the beloved's unfaithfulness, a wounded heart, love's anguish, the tyranny of the in-laws, the throes of separation, the evanescence of youth, the approach of death and, above all love for her *maalyun* (parents' home). Nothing unusual in these subjects, but they are rendered most poignantly. Even a very ordinary happening, like the breaking of a water pot and panic at the consequences (in *Redeem me, O my parents!).*

Poetry need not be autobiographical. It seldom is, except in the sense that a personal experience becomes a powerful image which a poet can draw from his armory for forceful communication in any poem. And since the themes of Habba Khaatoon are a mirror image of our hopes, aspirations, disappointments and despairs, it can be said that in her poems personal emotion (sorrow) is interwoven with universal experience, which is true of all lyrical poetry anywhere. Her poems are an expression of love in all its forms — some thing that makes them impersonal and eternal, so that they remain fresh in every age. Times have changed, but they (her poems) affect us deeply, which is also the beauty of all folk songs, with their simplicity of images and the sweetness of diction.

Her Traditional Style

Let us examine one of her lyrics :

aalava chaani bu daadi bala— *hur*
laalo kala aalavai — *vakhanai*
baalas zoon lajis tshala
tse kati zwol gamuts chhai
brunzaah chhas ta pato tsala
laalo kala aalavai

The first two lines are *hur* and *vakhanai* respectively

as indicated above. In the next four lines, the first and third rhyme, whereas the fourth is the *vakhanai* (refrain). This is in the traditional style.

Sometimes she makes all the three lines in the stanza rhyme, as in the example given below :

Swon myon dwon moharan tai
Vwola vesy vasavai bwon tai
Kana kuy dima sai swon tai
Vwolo myaani poshe madano.

The other traditional thing in a *vatsun* is the convention of the lover confiding in a close friend. She pours out her woes into her bosom and indeed makes her not only a confidante but also a messenger. Each stanza begins with asking her to accompany her to the river bank, the meadow or any place. It is always '*vwola vesy* (come, friend)' :

Let's go gather jasmines, friend.
O, I ache to see you flower first
Before I reach the mortal gate
Come back, my lover of flowers.

Oblique and indirect communication is always preferred to direct approach, and therefore the devoted friend, the confidante has a great status in Kashmiri poetry. The lover refers to herself as *baal* (maiden, belle) as in *Baal chhas karaan kosman kraav* (I am a maiden gathering violets).

Departure from Tradition

Sometimes you have a *vatsun* as a continuous piece without being divided into stanzas. Three examples are given below :

1. *Vwolo myaani rindo* (O, my love), a set of 8 lines,

with the rhyme scheme *a b c b d b e b* i.e, the even lines rhyming as in a *ghazal*.

2. *Vesiye gatshi astai astai* (Go softly, friend, and tell him), a set of 7 lines with rhyme scheme *a b a b b a a*.

3. *Neri, neri, su dai yaar tshaandon* (Come, friend, let's seek my love), an unbroken group of 22 lines, where all the even lines rhyme, as in a *ghazal*.

Imagery

The images are simple, but most telling :

More precious than all the world
Is his godlike form to me

The pot remains unfilled, forgotten —
The storm of sins may shatter it soon !

I read *Quran* from end to end —
But the mysteries of love are deeper far.

The evanescence of youth and the brevity of existence are described in the following lines :

With summer steadily on the wane
Like the moon poised on the mountain top
I too shall soon be gone.

The cat lies ever in wait for the mouse.

A lush green basil fading away.

O youth, robe of the softest wool,
Who dyed you in this gorgeous hue,
Who dreamt that moths would feed on you ?

She uses onomatopoeia effectively :

Haantsi kami draantsi suutý katurnam badano (For what sins has he carved me up?). And here is a narration of the beloved's callousness :

He bared me to mid-winter frost,
Let the summer sun scorch me dry,
Made me wander like a wayward stream
He makes me languish night and day

I was a happy greenwood pine,
Till this callous woodsman chopped me down
And burnt each piece to ashes.
He makes me languish night and day

The superb mastery of rhyme can be seen in the lines given below :

1. Medial rhyme

vasi pyom busa naar su ti haa tsolum
Golum tsey pata paan
Vudri khasun kudur gom
Zwola chham na yivaan, mwola chhukh vaalaan
Bam tai zila chhas soz vaayaanai
Vila nai thovnam na hosh

Madan vaaro badan zoltham

2. Beginning rhyme

Naavas lagai bo
Haavasa zoo chhas vandaanai

Finally I feel tempted to quote in full the following poem which gives a perfect illustration of all kinds of rhyme — beginning, medial and end ;

Thovnam ruma rumai
Chhu me baale tamanna

(Smitten with love in every limb,
I am consumed with passionate longing)

Dwosi pethý vuchhnamai
Tosa pompur gandasai
Gosa kyaah rotnamai
Chhu me baale tamanna
Bara kiný vuchhnamai
Gara kamý hovnasai
Zara zara thovnamai
Chhu me baale tamanna
Daari kiný vuchhnamai
Kaari vwognuný dura daaný
Taari dil kor namai
Chhu me baale tamanna

Vwoga pethý vuchhnamai
Shoga laagith boolnam
Rogi rogi gom gumai
Chhu me baale tamanaa

Yaara bala vuchhnamai
Maara karnas aaraval
Naara paan zolnamai
Chhu me baale tamanaa

Pot zooni vuchhnamai
Mot laagith kot aam
Lot kava lognamai
Chhu me baale tamanaa

Apart from the wealth of rhyme in this *vatsun*, it is one of the most beautifully constructed of all her poems. She feels the presence of her beloved everywhere at all times of the day. The quality and intensity of the emotion bursting at the seams throughout is conveyed through the language of suggestion. In fact Habba Khaatoon in this poem is perhaps the first Kashmiri poet to move from

the language of statement to the language of suggestion. One does not find this trait so pronounced in her other poems. One can also say that the emotional identification of Habba Khaatoon with all womankind in love seems to be incomparable.

The Vice of Loading a Meaning

It would perhaps be wrong to isolate a single line or image and invest it with our own meaning, as has been done by some critics with the line:

> Can a handful of rice sustain one ever,
> If Providence does not come to his aid?

They conclude that this refers to the economic devastation of the times, with people reduced to the direst penury because of hunger, famine and death stalking the land. 'A handful of rice' need not be taken literally. The image may have been suggested by the famine. But it could also have been suggested by just poverty, which is a perennial phenomenon and does not emerge only when there is a 'famine'. For example Nadim's poem, "The Mole," which was written in 1959 (when there was no famine at all) contains the following image:

> *aki garbenyi kana manza tsaarith*
> *phali phali tujmuts leji kits tsaal*

> (the poor woman who has gleaned from husk,
> grain by grain, a handful of rice)

However, her theme was vastly different, as is evident from all that she has written. 'And if providence does not come to his aid' is an expression used by other poets too in various situations. Her next line in the same poem lends significance to the earlier two lines:

And I had gallons of the wine of love.

This refers perhaps to the gift of love after emotional starvation. One might mention that in the forties and fifties of the 20th century many progressive writers were keen on labelling all earlier poets, including the great mystic Lal Ded, as 'progressive poets'. After the decline of progressivism, this mental tendency also disappeared.

People also wonder how, with Yusuf Shah's love, admiration and patronage, and her eminence at his court and the ceaseless luxury placed at her disposal, she did not change her past images into an image of present prosperity. What was rooted in her mind — feelings, imagination and style based on the life she lived till she stepped into the court - could not be discarded and a new structure built. It is perhaps important to remember that the chaos and internecine political strife that was the order of the day had nothing to do with her evolution as a great master of the art of *vatsun*. In fact most of her great poems were written in those very chaotic times. After the Mughals came, it was more silence than speech for her. Thus there is no question of changing her style of composition because of the time. Like Arnimaal who came 200 years later, she was not a mystic; she was not a narrative poet; she was not a court poet. These domains were foreign to her. And what she wrote and sang was immensely liked by everyone at the court and outside, including the king. Thus there was no need for her to don a new robe, nor can a poet absolutely steeped in one colour suddenly decide to put on a different one. When Mahjoor tried this experiment as a poet of revolution, the result was dismal, and the situation was fortunately retrieved only by his poetry of disillusion in two of his *ghazals*. Habba Khaatoon remained in the mould in which she had been cast. She was of the earth, earthy, working on a "two-inch piece of ivory" called the *vatsun* with a sensuousness and an astounding wealth of imagery which

are beyond the pale of an ordinary poet. It is this that makes her wealth of internal rhyme, assonance and alliteration more telling than they would be in a skilled craftsman in verse.

Lastly, she was the living soul of Kashmiri music. Her love of music was there from the beginning, long before she met Yusuf Shah when she was 26. In fact, he came to know her as a great singer whose fame had already spread wide. At his court, however, she had the opportunity of coming very close to the king's musicians and having a full-scale accompaniment with a variety of exotic instruments when she sang. Her knowledge of Persian classical music deepened in this environment, and from being a votary she mastered *Muquaam-i-Iraq*, in which her *vatsun*, *Gindane draayas*, is cast, and became a creator, and composed a *raag* known as *Rast Kashmiri*, based on *Rast Faarri*, a very popular *raag* sung at midnight. Thus Kashmiri music, which had suffered neglect for want of patronage for over three centuries, had a rebirth, and her compositions found a place in the song book of professional court singers, the *Soophiyaana Kalaam*, (which is an anthology of poems - mostly those of renowned Persian poets like Sadi, Hafiz and others with *raag*, *taal* and *swar* mentioned with each song), though certain orthodox elements did not welcome this recognition given to Kashmiri poetry. Incidentally, it is the *soophiyaana kalaam*, the *rov* and the performance of professional and amateur singers at weddings and other celebrations that have been the main source of the songs of the *vatsun kaal* (Age of lyricism) of Kashmiri poetry.

Khwaja Habib Ullah Nowshehri (1555-1617)

Son of a petty shopkeeper at Nowshehra in Srinagar (where he lived and lies also buried), he was held in high esteem as one who from childhood showed no interest in material gain, even while running his shop - the customers would take what they wanted and deposit the cost in the

cash box kept there. He had learnt the *Quraan* by heart. He wrote mainly in Persian with "Hubbee" as his pen name. Being a contemporary of Habba Khaatoon, he had ocassion to listen to her songs being sung, and that is when he started writing in Kashmiri also. He wrote in the *vaakh* tradition, only his *vaakh* had longer lines than Lal Ded's and had a refrain added on, as in a *vatsun*. Some of his Kashmiri poems are an example of bi-lingual poetry. The beloved in his poem was not a human being, as in Habba Khaatoon, but God. He was very fond of singing. When on his death bed he was advised to repent having wasted his time on singing, his answer was that he was repenting not having devoted himself more assiduously to singing throughout his life.

Some of his lines are very popular, e.g.

- *Tsununý poshi ranga hai deethmas tan*
- *Pashun tsalee dwon aalaman*
- *Kentsav pyaala chey payaa pai*

Mirza Akmal-ud-din Badakshi (1642-1717)

Belonged to a family of immigrants from Badakshan and held a responsible position in the Mughal administration. His two books of poetry in Persian are *Makhbar-ul-Asraar* and *Bahar-ul-Irfaan*, a *masnavi* explaining the significance of *arfaat*, the vigil on the eve of Id. Very little of his Kashmiri verse has been preserved. One of his songs *Baali hai ruma rumai, chhum yaara chon tamannaa* was inspired by Habba Khaatoon's famous *vatsun, Chhu me baale tamannaa.*

Another well-known song of his is :

Heri vatshaayi yim atsha ratshaayi
Son vatshaayi gindaane
Aasmaan chi pariyi vatshaai
Aabi zamzam chhavane

Tan naavith beyi toorý khatsaayi
Son vatshaayi gindaane

Juma Bibi, a disciple of Badakshi was a confectioner's wife in Navhatta in Srinagar who wrote both mystical and love lyrics. She is remembered mostly for her elegy on the death of her master :

Myaani heeyo heeyo
Hee bu ladyo naavanui

Sahab Kaul (1629)

Born in 1629 at Habba Kadal, Srinagar, Sahab Kaul was profoundly influenced by *Lal Vaakh*, and from early days evinced a yogic and philosophical bent of mind and made a serious study of the Upanishads and Shaivism. Some of his books written in Sanskrit (*Devi Vilaas, Shiv Sidh Niti* and others) are well known. He wrote three books in Kashmiri: *Janam Charit, Kalpa Vraksh* and *Krishnavataara Charit.* The manuscript of the first is available in the Research Library, Srinagar. That of the second is preserved at his home in Kharayaar. And heavily guarded too, for his descendant, Nand Lal Kaul Sahab, is averse to showing or lending it to any one. The book is an example of unusual literary craftsmanship, with words of many languages — Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Punjabi and Ladakhi — mixed in the text. They are related to Vedanta, the Puranas, Bodh mantras and *Guru Granth.* His second book, *Janama Charit*, delineates the evolution of philosophical thought in Kashmir. The third was published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal with an English translation by Grierson in 1928 under the title *Shri Krishnavataara Leela*, using the Roman script for the text. This is the first Kashmiri poem to be written in the *leela* style. The only defect in this work is the selection of vocabulary, which is certainly pre-Lal Ded. He seems consciously purifying the language by meticulously

avoiding all 'foreign' words that had crept into the living Kashmiri language.

Rupa Bhaawani (1625-1721)

Rupa Bhaawani is the second well-known mystic poetess of Kashmir. She was born in 1625 (some say 1621) and died in 1721. This *yogini* with a mastery of Sanskrit, Persian and Hindustani was well-versed in Vedanta, Upanishads and Shaivism, and was adored for her saintliness and sayings by Hindus and Muslims alike, so much so that when she died the Hindus wanted to cremate her while the Muslims insisted on a proper burial, like what happened when Kabir died.

Coming from a Kashmiri Pandit family at Nawakadal, Srinagar, she suffered the agony of an early marriage like Lal Ded. Her father, Madhav Joo Dhar proved to be her spiritual mentor in that period of spiritual anguish as Sidh Shrikanth was for Lal Ded. He introduced her to a Muslim *fakir* called Sayyed Kamal. Eventually she decided to leave home and meditated for 12 years at Chashma Sahibi, after which during her sojourn over the valley she spent many years at Manigam, Laar and Vaaskur. She rose to great spiritual heights. The Dhars called her the spiritual head of the group and she was known as *Alkeshwari*, (Divinity of the Lock of Hair) for she wore her long hair unkempt and *Alak Ishwari* (Incarnation of the Invisible). Her death anniversary in mid-winter is celebrated every year (7th of the dark fortnight of Magh).

Her *vaakh* have come to us in the usual oral tradition. No authentic collection is available with commentaries like Grierson, Barnett and Temple's on the Lal *vaakh*. A manuscript in the Sharada script about 200 years old, which was with Ram Chand Dhar, former librarian of the Research Department, is now with the Alkeshwari Trust. As Kachru says, " The recent collection of her sayings in Hindi, entitled *Shri Rupabhavani Rahaysopadesha* (the

mystery of the spiritual teachings of the divine Rupa) is the most detailed text available. It provides the lexical meanings and commentaries on the *vaakhs* with the text divided into four parts, viz, salvation, knowledge, ecstacy of self-realization and divine happiness. The *vaakhs* are not identical in structure; they vary from three to seven lines, the last line being the refrain."

Her *vaakh* are difficult to understand for various reasons :

- They present an esoteric mystical experience.
- Their language is at many places completely Sanskritized, thus not intelligible to the layman.
- The imagery and diction is not as effective as in Lal Ded.

To quote Prem Nath Bazaz (*Daughters of Vitasta*) "The language is archaic ; there are double and occasionally more meanings to what she said. The expressions are obscure, unintelligible, mystical and esoteric. The devotees, afraid to incur the saint's displeasure, refuse to explain the sacred secrets; probably they themselves know precious little of what they recite or contemplate in blind admiration."

Her *vaakh* reveal the influence of both Kashmir Shaivism and Islamic Sufism; and explain the mystic symbolism of her yogic practices. According to her, non-attachment and dissolution of 'self' or ego are the essentials of realizaton :

Selflessness is the sign of the Selfless;
Bow down at the door of the Selfless.
The selfless are the highest authority—
The kings of the time and wearers of the crest and crown.

As a tailpiece, an example of her profundity combined with ready wit is provided by her conversation with Shah

Sadiq Qalandar :

He: Come to me (i.e. become a Muslim) and your *rwoph* (silver) will become gold

She: Come to me (i.e. become a Hindu) and you will become *mwokhta* (pearl)

Mark the puns : *rwoph* is her name; it also means 'silver', *mwokhta* means both 'pearl' and 'salvation'.

Nunda Daar (d. 1774)

Nunda Daar's date of birth is not known. All that we know is that this poet lived in the village Kaathyul and died in 1774, and spent his days in the company of *rishis* and *sufis*, discussing spiritual matters. His having penned some marsiyas is an indication that he belonged to the Shia faith. His only extant composition is a long poem entitled *Dolaki Shaar,* in which he talks of the various stages in the process of self realization. It is said that the poem can be sung to the accompaniment of the *dolak* alone; hence its title. A few lines :

Haa paak zaatai parvardigaaro, tsui kartam raham
tai
Buma tai zila ho dolukÿ chhai dapaan brahma chhui
samsaar
Tsui chhukh awal ta tsui chhukh aakhur tsui kartam
karam tai
Tsui chhuk paanai heri bwon taabaan tsui chhukh
beenaadaar.

The entire poem evinces appropriate diction, the right sequence of thoughts and the effective style of putting them across.

The poet Fakhir, a disciple of the Persian poet, Atta Ullah Humma, wrote both in Persian and Kashmiri. He is

said to have died soon after Humma breathed his last in 1780. The manuscript of his poems was preserved by one Khwaja Ahmed. It has *na'ats* (poems of adoration of the Prophet Mohammad), ghazals and songs. He and Syed Ullah Shahabadi are the only two poets who attempted ghazal writing successfully before Mahmood Gami. Syed Ullah died in 1795. His date of birth is not known.

Arnimaal

About two centuries after Habba Khaatoon came the second significant poetess of the *Vatsun* age, Arnimaal. She was born at Pala Haalan, a village about 19 miles north of Srinagar in a well-to-do and cultured family, as she says in one *vatsun* :

Pala Haalan maalyun chhuye
(Pala Haalan is your native place)

It is also corroborated by another *vatsun* where she says:

Sendi vaanýi bu paan naavasai
(I will wash myself in the waters of the Sindh),

which confirms that the village was on the bank of the Sindh river.

She was married very early in life, in childhood according to the old Kashmiri Pandit custom, to Bhawani Das Kachru of Rainawari. It was an affluent and well-known and well connected family, and both of them, husband and wife grew up together from childhood. For her he was the idol both before and after she attained puberty, when she discovered to her dismay that his affections were elsewhere :-

When youth had cast its spell on me,
What passion seized my *bulbul*
And made him alight on an alien branch ?

Bhawani Das belonged to an affluent and cultured family of Rainawari. He was a brilliant, thoughtful introvert, and perhaps did not fancy Arnimaal, the village maiden, without knowing what she was. After completing his education he found himself appointed on a coveted position and rose to eminence, both officially and socially. It was the second elevation that led to the doom of Arnimaal, for he found himself in the company of pleasure-loving aristocrats and the saloons cast their spell on him. And he was held in high esteem, his poetical talent adding to his social eminence. His pen-name was 'Neku' and he was the author of *Bahar-i-taveel,* (written in Persian), a series of poetic prose hymns in praise of God. The rift between Arnimaal and her husband widened to a chasm. Though she tried her best to make herself presentable to him, he deserted her emotionally. Deeply wronged, she shifted back to Pala Haalan, and poured out her woes in her poems. Rainawari, the place where she grew, was more idyllic then, when it was less populated than now, with the back waters of the Dal lake making inlets into its streets and bazaars. This gifted her with a sense of awareness of the freshness of the country air which is reflected in her poetry.

She is the second poet after Habba Khaatoon in the field of love lyrics. Her *vatsan* have in addition a plaintive tone, an atmosphere of unmitigated gloom.They have also an extraordinary sensuousness. She is said to have died young, though nobody knows when.

Many people have taken liberties with the poetry of all the great poets and poetesses like Lal Ded, Nunda Ryosh, Habba Khaatoon, Arnimaal and others. Sometimes it is the text that has been 'modified' (or, to put it in prosaic language, 'tampered with') to suit personal preference. Sometimes the authorship has been tampered with, again to suit personal preference. And when these preferences have free play, they play havoc. The classical example is the poetry of Lal Ded and Nunda

Ryosh. Some sell Lal Ded as Nunda Ryosh, others vice versa. A reader with an adequate knowledge of Kashmiri literature and with a sensitive awareness of what the poet is putting across will not make this mistake. For example, when you know that Lal Ded did not write didactic verse while Nunda Ryosh did, there will be much less confusion about the authorship of the poems.

There are many legends about Habba Khaatoon, and Arnimaal cannot compare with her in this extraordinary plumage, including the one about her becoming the queen. But the belief of generations of poets and lovers of Kashmiri poetry that Arnimaal existed cannot be brushed aside, because it is a legend of sorts. What is needed most is a critical examination of the poems themselves.

Let us take the following poem, which has so far been known as the best known of Arnimaal:

Arni rang gom shraavuni hiye
kar yiye darshun diye
(The pallor of fading flowers has fallen
On the midsummer jasmine bloom in me.
O when will these eyes see him again ?)

We have been told that this poem fascinated Mahmood Gami so much that he was inspired to write a similar one, using the same *hur* and *vakhanai* (first two lines) and some images from the original. It is very much like how Habba Khaatoon's:

Dil nith ratý tham goshe
vwolo myaani poshe madano

inspired Mahjoor to write his well-known poem:

Tsolhamaa roshi roshe
Poshe mati jaanaano

Now Habba Khaatoon's poem cannot be shown as Mahjoor's because:

— We know all about Mahjoor's compositions, and

- Habba Khaatoon's poems were available in published form well before Mahjoor started using his pen. It would be wrong to conclude that since the poem *Arni rang gom shraavuni hiye* bears a remarkable resemblance to Gami's poem with the same beginning, it must have been written by Gami, and all the other poems that are supposed to be Arnimaal's were actually written by Habba Khaatoon, the only other name associated with love lyrics called *vatsun*. But what is proved beyond doubt by the possibility of Arnimaal's poetry being mistaken for Habba Khaatoon's and vice versa is that both of them were (as we would say about Lal Ded and Nunda Ryosh) poets of the same eminence.

Their poetry has certain common characteristics :-

- Both of them use the spoken language, with some Persian words and phrases naturalized as Kashmiri — more so in Arnimaal because during the 200 years between them, the Persian influence on the Kashmiri language had become stronger.

- Both use mellifluous language, excellent for the *vatsun* which is essentially meant to be sung.

- Both use various poetical devices and the music of words, including onomatopoeia in a remarkable way e.g.:

  Habba Khaatoon : *haantsi kami draantsi suutý*

  Arnimaal: - *kruuda zaalan,*

kwonji kara tshwonji
tshaanda swona daavan kaatsaah

Despite these similarities, the two sets of poems do not bear the same signature — artistic, linguistic and emotional:

- For example, mark the feminine ending of the following lines of Arnimaal, which you do not find so much in Habba Khaatoon:

  (a) *Me kari tas kitsa poshan maala ta*

  (b) *Tee kas nish hyaka haavith bu*

  (c) *Daamaana bodum ashi mati*

  (d) *Padmaani ada kar yiyam tai*

  (e) *Doori roodum anda vanan tai*

- The following set of words and expressions that you find in Arnimaal have a distinct stamp of being used in association with Hindu worship :

  darshan, aashavend, shyaama swondar, kanda naabada aarudmutui, kwonga kofoor beyi ambarai, deeha zeevan daan

- There a beautiful play on the meaning of the word *naav* in *Shyaama Swondar me kar poori.*

- Arnimaal's poems are an expression of unrelieved gloom, while Habba Khaatoon's poetry presents a normal mixture of light and shade. She does mention disappointments, but also love received. No such ray of sunshine ever permeates the gloom of Arnimaal. Then there is a remarkable difference between their remarks on their rivals. Habba Khaatoon does not wish them well and

says that "they wouldn't jeer if they suffered like me".

Arnimaal does not blame them:

'How can I blame my rivals,
Consumed by the same flames?'

- Finally, Arnimaal's famous *vatsun* on everlasting hope sums up her personality: her religion was universal love and peace :

  Sow seeds of friendship all around,
  And let no foe be slain.

Mir Abdulla Behaqi (d. 1798) is the first Kashmiri poet who has adopted the *masnavi* (rhyming couplets) as his medium in poetry. Two examples of this are his *Kaashir Akeeda* and *Waquaya.*

Mulla Ubaid Ullah dwelt at Narpirastan in the house of Shah Munawar Haqqani. Azad says that some call him Abaid Ullah Shahabadi. He wrote in Persian and Kashmiri a number of *ghazals* and *qaseedas* (long odes). Most of his poems cannot be located.

Shah Qalandar

Shah Qalandar is not the same as his near namesake, Shah Saadiq Qalandar (who was quite close to Rupa Bhaawani, as mentioned earlier). He is said to have been senior to Mahmood Gami. Kamil says he belonged to the village Haigam, and died in 1850, while Saqi places him in Wahthora where his grave still stands. He was a man of great stature, a saintly person.

His works have been collected only recently and include a number of *ghazals* which influenced Rasul Mir and the *masnavi, Adham ta Guljaan*, a Persian story of a

faqir Adham falling in love with the princess Guljaan, and the king, her father not only blessing the union but also appointing him heir to the throne. It is remarkable that despite Kashmiri having absorbed Persian vocabulary over a couple of centuries, the poet does not give you the impression that he is using a foreign tongue, because the Persian words are used as 'naturalized', not pompously to display erudition. The following lines would give an idea of his style and diction:

Chashma kyaah chhai tse pur aab
Kamee mas khaasý baree
Chhu kas kyut jaam-e-sharaab
Me kun mwokh haav swondaree.

Naalý tas khaalý maalan vaalý kanan
Timan nish aashkan kam vasul baran
Tulan aasý anzini handý paathý gardan
Gatshan os haali deegar ahli dardan.

Momin Sahab

There is no information available about his exact dates of birth and death, except that he lived when the 18th century switched over to the 19th. His home was Bebagom in Pulwama. He was a renowned Sufi saint and a preceptor of Mahmood Gami, Swochha Kraal and Karam Buland.

Not much of his poetical output is available, but whatever is, gives evidence of remarkable poetic sensitivity and technique, for example :

Panunui khoon gatshi treshi kani chyonuye
Sui gatshi tsaangi zaalunaye lo
Tami ke gaashi gatshi praan prazalunaye
Ratshi ratshi matshi maaz khyonaye lo.

However, to him belongs the honour of writing the

first *masnavi* in Kashmiri, entitled *Mantaq-al-tayyar* (389 verses), based on a Persian *masnavi* of 500 verses with the same title, written much earlier by Sheikh Fareed-ud-din Attaar. It has a number of associated tales woven round the central theme, and was considered the Bible of the Sufi philosophy. Momin borrows only the main kernel of the poem and shapes it into the story of the spiritual flight of birds, under the leadership of a lapwing, through the seven stages of the upward flight, viz, quest, love, doubt, release, solitude, wonder and the eternal union. In the process many birds fall and only a few are left. Though the poem breaks new ground in Kashmiri, certain defects are noticeable, mainly that it doesn't have any songs woven into it as you find in all *masnavis,* and the various *vatsan* in it do not bear his signature. Saqi feels that the defects may have crept in because it was published long after it was composed.

Karam Buland (d 1899), a resident of Haanz Gund, Wahthora, was an intimate friend of Swochha Kraal. With most people the names they bear are a travesty; not so with Karam Buland for he was a man of both physical and moral stature. His great love of music and organizing music sessions brought him in close contact with Momin Sahab, who not only became his guru but also the source of his poetical inspiration, one of his songs became very popular and remains so even now:

Bu draayas shoka chaane,
gulan manz vaný dimaayo
Bata yeli dazi naarai,
lagyas no kaanh ti chaarai,
Aavareni bala praarai,
bu naaras vaný dimaayo.

He had the gift of communicating a deeply-felt emotional experience in the simplest of words and images, very much in the manner of folk songs.

Swochha Kraal (1774-1854) belonged to a potter's

family at Yendragam near Pulwama. His date of birth is estimated on the evident belief that he was 80 when he died. The entire potter community shifted to Pulwama when the new Land Settlement Scheme prepared by Sir Walter Lawrence was introduced.

His poetry is an exposition of the philosophy of *Wahdat-al-wajood*, which is the bedrock of the faith of all *sufis*, in fact of all mystics who believe that God and man are not two separate entities. They firmly believe *soo hum soo* (I am He). Sufism had already been established before him, but he gave it a clear shape by presenting the eternal truth of the faith in plain and simple language. Some of his poems are forceful and popular :

Kenh nai os ta kyaahtaam os
Kenhas maane chhu kentshaa
kenhas maane zaanaan gos
paanai os bu bahaanai

Nwokta pyav aanas gaan pyos naav
Gaan sapud mahram korun taav taav
Tami shechhi Mansoor maarana aav
Naav dar aab ta aab dar naav.

Shah Ghafoor who belonged to the turn of the century (18th-19th) was a contemporary of Mahmood Gami. He belonged to the village Chhon, about 2 miles south-east of Badgam on the plateau. His children shifted to Sadrabal, and the well-known Qadeem Sadrabali belongs to this line.

Very few of his compositions are still extant, but a study of these reveals a poet of the highest sensitivity and profound knowledge of both Islamic Sufism and the Shastras, as Mohammad Amin Kamil has pointed out. Moti Lal Saqi maintains that in addition to his being steeped in the knowledge of Hindu Shaivism, he was more profoundly influenced by the Saguna faith which brought him closer to Ramanujam and Madhavacharya. In fact

his poems, including his most famous one *Soo hum soo* read like *leelaas;* that's why they have been included in the collection *Sharika Lahiri.* He has used the *vatsun* style throughout to articulate the same thought that had been there in the *Upanishads* 2000 years ago. His poems show a strong influence of Lal Ded.

A few of his well-known lines are given below :

Yot yith zanmas kenh chhuna laarun
Daarnaayi daarun soo hum soo
Brahma, Vishnu, Maheeshwar gaarun
Shaf hyoo chhuy tihundui zoo
Paan hai khata nai jaan hyakh maarun
Daarnaayi daarun soo hum soo

4

Longer Narrative Poetry

Bazmia Masnavis-I

With the end of the 18th century a new literary age begins in Kashmir. Apart from its being a very prolific period, its dominant urge and characteristics survived well into the present century. The poets modelled their compositions closely on Persian in diction and metre, borrowed wholesale the theme, the story, the epithets and phrases, conceit and hyperbole of Persian *masnavis*. Indeed, the poet goes further and merely translates.

This is the age of the *masnavi*, the metrical romance of love, adventure and war, of impossible exploits and astonishing deeds of adventure. Local legends of Heemaal and Naagiraay, Akanandun, a few stories from the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* have been versified, and Punjabi romances *Heer Raanjha* and *Sohni Mahiwal* rendered into Kashmiri, but the bulk of the Kashmiri *masnavis* are translations of Persian epics or *masnavis* written in the Persian metre, *bahar-i-hazaj*.

The largest number of Kashmiri *masnavis* are *bazmia* (love) romances as against *razmia* (war) *masnavis*. There are also *hazlia* (comic-satiric) *masnavis*, but their number is small.

The second Persian literary form that entered Kashmiri poetry at this time was the *ghazal*. Mahmood

Gami was the first to introduce it, and in Rasul Mir's hands it reached a level of excellence which is praised by the poets even today. In fact the period we are talking about is more renowned for the birth of the *ghazal* in Kashmir than the age of *masnavi*, for the passion for the *masnavi* is not long lasting, while the *ghazal* remains, though it may keep on evolving.

It is also necessary to point out that this period is not confined to the imported Persian forms of *ghazal* and *masnavi*, but displays a certain richness with all Kashmiri forms too, for *vaakh*, *vatsun* and *lol* lyric are very much alive. It is thus an age vibrant with multiple poetic nuances, with a number of songs enriching the various *masnavis*.

Mahmood Gami

With Mahmood Gami (1765-1855), the most outstanding poet after Habba Khaatoon, Kashmiri poetry entered the 19th century. After the demise of the leading light of the *vatsun* age, Kashmir suffered literary drought for two centuries. Not that the muse had disappeared; she only wore a different apparel. Persian was now ascendant being, apart from the official and court language and the medium of education, the language of culture and thus the language of the elite. Naturally all those who could wield the pen wanted to create something in Persian. As a consequence, the native language was looked down upon and ignored. In this type of linguistic climate, many Kashmiris did remarkably well as authors in this foreign medium. In fact some of them were acknowledged as great writers not only in India but also in the home of the Persian language, Iran. To name a few outstanding authors: Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi (b.1521) whose *masnavis* and ghazals made him a compeer of Nizami and Jami; Baba Daud Khaki (b. 1521), a mystical poet; Mulla Muhsin Fani (b 1615), philosophical poet and author of *Dabistan-i- Mazahib* (a comparative study of

world religions); Mulla Tahir Ghani, the greatest name associated with Persian poetry with a facile pen and a fertile imagination; Bhawani Das Kachru, whose *Bahr-i-taveel* is very well known. There were also historians like Mulla Ahmad Shahabadi (who was commissioned by Budshah to translate *Rajatarangini* into Persian), Malik Haidar, Narayan Kaul Ajiz, Khwaja Mohammad Didamari and Birbal Kachru.

Gami was educated in Persian and Arabic by his father, a well-known *maulvi*. As he came of age, he started writing in Persian, like almost all our modern poets started their authorship in Urdu, but he soon switched over to his mother tongue. Some people feel that this happened when his son died young, and he wrote the *marsiya* (elegy) in Kashmiri : *Haa Sultaano lagayo*. This, as Naji Munawar points out, is untenable, for he wrote his first *masnavi*, *Sheereen Khusro*, when he was 26, at which age or before that he couldn't have had this kind of bereavement. When his Kashmiri poems made their appearance, he was immediately popular. The elite, however, derisively named him *gaamee*, i.e., a rustic rhymester, for nothing written in any language other than Persian was worth noticing. But he accepted this appelation gladly :

Chaaný taareef karaan Nizami
Chaaný tauseef paraan Jami
Vani kyaah voný Mahmood Gami
Yaa Rasool Salaam Alaik.

He was, as Wali Ullah Matoo called him, a *mard-i-ustaad* (master poet), a colossus in the domain of poetry till he died at the ripe old age of ninety. His lyrics are a nosegay of any of various themes from love to mysticism. As far as his language is concerned, it is a mixture of Kashmiri with a liberal percentage of Persian, but without displaying any incongruity of sound or sense. This combined with the sweetness of diction, excellent craftsmanship, appropriate imagery, varying refrain and

haunting verbal melody show that being called *mard-i-ustaad* was a well deserved honour. Some of his delectable lines are given below :

Kartham manz vwondas jaay
Me no maay mashee zaanh

Kar saa myon nyaay ande
Maarýmande madanvaaro
Haantsalo tsol ham tsoore
Ravarovtham shoore paan

Katyoo chhukh nunda baane
Vwolo maashooka myaane

Roshi vwolaa posh ho laagai
Gosh thaavtam vanayo zaaree

Paanai paanas vuchhne aav

He was the first to attempt *ghazals* after the Persian masters of this form. In some of them he departed from the tradition of the lover being a woman and the beloved a man, and the poet naturally speaking as the woman in love. In his *vatsan*, too, there is a slight departure from the normal, in the sense that the fourth line is not always the refrain but a line having the same rhyme. One of the forms which is indebted to him is the folk song called *rov*. Indebted in the sense that it acquired a literary status with a great poet like him handling it. It is a very popular song-dance form with two rows of young women with waists and shoulders interlocked facing each other and rhythmically moving forward and backward, singing a song :

Samýtav viginyav rov hai karavai
rov hai karavai
Sangarmaalan tshaaye lo lo
tshaaye lo lo

He also wrote *naats* (poems in praise of the Holy Prophet). But he will be most remembered as the first poet to introduce the *masnavi* (narrative poetry written in couplets) in Kashmiri literature. He made a start with *Sheereen Khusroo* and ended about 60 years later with *Haroon Rasheed.* During this long and prolific period he wrote 6 more *masnavis*, viz *Laila Majnun, Yusuf Zuleikha, Sheikh Sanaan, Mahmood Ghaznavi, Sheikh Mansur and Pahalýnaama.* In addition there came the 88-couplet *masnavi* entitled *Yuk Hikaayat*, which describes the Holy Prophet's grief for the sins of the faithful. "In writing his *masnavis*, he was overwhelmed by his Persian learning and the Persian original works which he translated and adapted, and could not transform them to suit the Kashmiri language or its temper. He uses not only Persian words but also Persian constructions as well. The diction is often enough listless and stilted, artificial and imitative, not racy of the soil, even when the requisite vocabulary was available, and what is worse, the foreign words are unassimilated to the genius of the language. We call this *rekhta*, a plastered language, as against the language he himself used in his songs and *ghazals*."

(J.L. Kaul : *Studies in Kashmiri*)

His first *masnavi*, *Sheereen Khusro* does not have a smooth movement and sweetness, though the interspersed songs do not suffer from this defect. The secret of the success of *Sheikh Sanaan* is perhaps its short and brisk metre. The half century after he produced his first *masnavi* was doubtless a most prolific period. His most famous *masnavi* is *Yusuf Zuleikha* with various metres employed. It was translated into German in 1894 by the German writer, Brickhard. His *Laila Majnun*, says Naji Munawar, is more like an opera with its plethora of songs. *Mahmood Ghaznavi* and *Pahalýnaama* are shorter pieces. There is no doubt that *Yusuf Zuleikha* set a pattern followed by others.

Maqbool Amritsari

It is a pity that in Kashmir many a bud has blossomed unseen and many a poet has been consigned to oblivion or long eclipse. One of them is Maqbool Amritsari whose manuscripts have recently been discovered. No information is available about when and where he was born or died. Why he is mentioned here immediately after Mahmood Gami is based on the oblique evidence provided in his works, as we shall see. The manuscripts (all handwritten) discovered are the following : *Pahalýnaama, Mansur Naama, Yusuf Zuleikha, vatsan* and ghazals. Only the third one, *Yusuf Zuleikha* is available in the Research Library.

All observations of this poet are based on intelligent conjecture, for example in one manuscript of *Pahalýnaama* the text ends with mention of "Maqbool Sahib Amritsari of village Heewaar" (near Verinag) as the author.

The three masnavis mentioned above were also written by Mahmood Gami. It is probable that Maqbool was unaware of this fact, as otherwise he would not have come out with a repetition of an identical process, selecting the same sections and episodes from Maulana Rumi's masnavi and just reproducing chunks from the original without any change. This would evidently indicate that he was born almost immediately after Gami.

The controversy about *Mansur Naama* is as follows: This masnavi was included by Mohammad Yusuf Taing in *Kuliyaat-i-Maqbool* (the complete works of Maqbool Shah Kraalawaari), because of a brazen act of plagiarism practised by one Hassan Masgar who had it published at his own work. With the discovery of this fraud, Taing credited the masnavi to the only Maqbool known as a writer of repute, ie. Maqbool Shah Kraalawaari. Naji Munawar's observation is that Kraalawaari would have been the last person to duplicate the effort of Mahmood Gami, for it was well-known that Gami had come out

with a *masnavi* entitled *Sheikh Mansoor.*

Maqbool Amritsari wrote also *vatsan* and ghazals. Kraalawaari also wrote a number of *vatsan*, but while the theme with him is human love, with Amritsari it is religious devotion. While Kraalawaari did not write many ghazals — most of them not making a mark — Amritsari's ghazals have a vitality.

Wali Ullah Motoo (d1858), a contemporary of Mahmood Gami, was a resident of Wuhan village in Beeroo. He is known as the author of the masnavi, *Heemaal Naagiraay*, a translation of *Zarooriyaat-i-Deen* and a commendable translation of thirty ghazals of Shah-i-Hamadaan

The Kashmiri *masnavi* does not owe its birth to Mahmood Gami, as it was attempted earlier too by lesser lights, but in his hands it acquired recognition and respectability. But to Wali Ullah Motoo goes the credit of choosing for the first time a very popular folk tale of Kashmir - as old as the hills - for his narrative . It is the tragic love story of *Heemaal* and *Naagiraay* in the ancient times when their two communities, *Naagas* and *Pisaachas* were hostile. This story had been handled earlier too by Mulla Ashraf Bulbul as well as Sadr-ud-din, both in Persian. Motoo used the latter's *masnavi*, entitled *Kissa Arzan va Heemaal* as his model. What is remarkable in Motoo's rendering is its comparatively simple language, less ornate and unstifled by incongruous Persian diction. He maintains the Kashmiri poetic temper, as Kaul observes , which you see in his contrasting the good wife from the bad one and describing Heemaal's distraction at her lover's disappearance or when he narrates the dialogue between them at the time of the discovery of his caste.

However, it cannot match the exquisite sweetness in the narrative verse of Mahmood Gami or Maqbool Shah Kraalawaari, for perhaps the theme of love was not appealing enough for Motoo as the subject for poetry.

But he certainly was the first to demolish the conviction of the poets that only stories imported from Iran, considered those days as the fountain of culture, were proper and acceptable for *masnavis*.

However this ancient legend of Kashmir is not presented without a little amendment, with the introduction of events and characters not in the original, so that it does not remain the romantic love story told and retold for centuries. The first change : the lover is a Muslim disguised as a *kaafir*. Second : he is not a human being but belongs to the world of *peris* (fairies). Third : after Naagiraay is murdered and Heemaal plunges into his funeral pyre and both are consumed in the flames, a *fakir* comes from Medina and with his miraculous powers, turns the ashes back into two dead bodies which are buried according to the prescribed ritual. All this inartistic interference with the most popular legend of Kashmir was perhaps not necessary.

In this *masnavi*, Wali Ullah included the songs contributed by Zareef Khan and Aziz Khan, both his preceptors in a way. The latter , incidentally, attempted a song in the manner of Lal *vaakh*.

Rahim Saab (c 1775-c 1850) belonged to Sopor, as he himself asserts in three of his poems, which sets at rest different theories about his place of birth. He worked as a cowherd till his disablement as a consequence of a broken leg which made him shift to his daughter's home. According to Mohammad Ahsan, he was addressed as '*shah*' because of his being a cowherd, which Saqi strongly disputes as the term of respect used for a cowherd is *vagay* and not *shah*. Saqi does not also accept the cowherd theory, as Rahim's numerous references to, and thus some knowledge of the *shastras* would have been impossible for a person of Rahim's calling. He is of the opinion that he was perhaps a weaver, who has more chances of a close contact with educated Pandits. This theory however needs more substantiation.

Rahim belonged to the *Qaadri* school, as he himself

says:

Rahim silsila qaadri chhu dar haq
valla ta billa chhu na kaanh shaq

It is sad that he has been generally ignored as a poet and his poems lie scattered all over.

Others who followed Gami were Qutb-ud-din Qutb (d 1863); Waiz Haider Baba (d 1858), known mainly for his *na'ats*; Shukur Ryosh (d 1870) of Badrkot or Badgam according to Hajini and Kamil respectively, who figures in Hajini's anthology with his well-known poem, *Vanai bu dard-i-naistaan;* Beeb Ded (d 1862) of Hazratbal known for her poem *Bu ruma rumai sui lalavaan;* Sana Ullah of Kreer (1813-1875) who authored three *masnavis*, a few *na'ats, manaajaats and masqabaas;* and Wasaali, about whom nothing is known but for some memorable verses, such as

Vwothurmas baag goshan,
yiyam naa roshi roshe
karan bu maala poshan
yiyam naa roshi roshe

Rasul Mir (d 1870 c) is the fifth great poet in Kashmir, coming after Lal Ded, Nunda Ryosh, Habba Khaatoon and Mahmood Gami. An extremely handsome man, he died young - at the age of 30, about 15 years after Mahmood Gami, who in fact had predicted he would not live long. Both of them lived in the same village, Door (Shahabad). He grew, so to speak under the shadow of the stalwart. The total number of his poems available is 67. It is possible some more may have been there and were lost. He is also said to have written a *masnavi* entitled *Zebaa Nigaar*, as mentioned by Mohi-ud-din Miskeen, Azad and Mahjoor, but it has been found nowhere. So we have to presume that he wrote only 67 poems. And the theme, and construction of these poems do not indicate

a poetic talent inclined to writing *masnavis.*

It is true that he suffered by comparison with his elder contemporary who was prolific, versatile and full of innovations and experiments. But it is extremely unfair to class him as a second-rate poet, for he was pre-eminent as a song writer — in fact the greatest that appeared in the poetical firmament till then. Rasul Mir was not fond of putting his finger in every pie, writing a *masnavi*, writing a *na'at* or a ghazal in the usual pattern devoid of unity, producing psuedo-mystical verse — i.e., producing a plethora of poetical dishes considered necessary to win popular applause. He turned his back on mysticism because he was not a mystic, didn't produce a narrative poem because he was not a narrative poet, but whatever he wrote was something sprung straight from his heart and excellent. In short, he was a poet of stature and critically speaking, a greater offspring of the muse than even his contemporary, Mahmood Gami.

First his language: it doesn't give the impression either of purism or of flaunting a foreign medium which was in his time considered the language of culture. His genius lay in acclimatizing Persian words and phrases so that the reader doesn't get an impression that he is being served a foreign fare. He confined himself to the theme of human love — not on the exalted platonic plane but on the human level. He is frankly sensuous, uninhibited and lavish. His expression is passionate and spontaneous, with the added assets of melody and rhyme. He does not smother secular passion with love of God, as you find Maqbool Kraalawari doing in *Gulrez.* Nor is it correct to say that all his passionate love lyrics would not have been there if he had not been in love with the Kashmiri Pandit girl, Kwong. It would be belittling his stature as a great romantic poet. To give an assortment of some of his most popular and most unforgettable lines :

- *Thus gom haankali drasa gom bariye*
  Tsus gom vaaniji yaar maa aav

- *Rosh, mai rosh hai poshimaaliye lo*
  Bosh husnuk rozee na kaaliye lo

- *Raaza hyenzyaani naaz kyaah anzni gardan*
  Yaa Ilaahee chashmi bada nish rachhtan
  Gatshi kyaah kam chaani baargaahi lo lo
  Rinda poshimaal gindane draayi lo lo.

It is true that Mahmood Gami was the first Kashmiri poet to attempt writing a ghazal. But the first poet to be the pioneer of the ghazal form in Kashmir is Rasul Mir — As Mahjoor says :

> *Ath darda sozas parda tulith gav su Rasul Mir*
> *Mahjoor laagith aav beyi dubaara*
> (Rasul Mir, who unveiled love's gnawing pain,
> has come again, reborn as Mahjoor.)

He still continues to be the model for all those who attempt this form. The unity of impression you observe in his ghazals was unknown earlier and is rare even now, except with acknowledged masters of this form like Mohammad Amin Kamil. To give two verses from his *ghazals* before we close this section :

- *Durdaana aasith bekhabar mirjaan dapaan chhee*
  Khworsheed royas kaj nazar padmaan dapaan chhee

- *Dil band dil aazaar dil aaraama nigaaro*
  Gul khanda gul rwokhsaara gul andaama nigaaro

Maqbool Shah Kraalawaari (1820-1877) author of the best Kashmiri *masnavi*, *Gulrez*, had chronic ill health and poverty as his constant companions. His adopted son, Mustafa Shah died in early youth, and the *marsiya* he

wrote on his death is very touching :

> Distressing to see a graceful cypress felled
> uprooted to the ground, and one's own flesh
> and blood for ever vanish from the sight
> and sleep under the sod never to wake again.
>
> (tr : J.L. Kaul)

This elegy written in hexameter is the second personal elegy in Kashmiri (the first being on the death of Nunda Ryosh), otherwise the subject of most *marsiyas* is the martyrs of Karbalaa.

He is the author of *Gulrez, Grees Naama, Peer Naama* and a long poem *Bahaar Naama*. In addition two more *masnavis* — *Mansoor Naama* and *Zuleikha* — have been wrongly credited to him as has been pointed out in the section on Maqbool Shah Amritsari.

The best of his works is the *masnavi, Gulrez* and deservedly popular. It is actually a translation of a Persian *masnavi* of the same title by Zia-ud-din Naqshab which is partly verse and partly prose. It has 2327 verses, including songs, and is written in the *rekhta* style with a set poetic diction, which being repetitive — like '*gul rwokh*', '*gulnaar*' etc., — would normally certainly detract from the merit of the piece, but for the fact that the beauty of this *masnavi* is not confined to it, being a love romance between Ajab Malik and Noshe Lab. If it were, it would certainly be a jejune affair. For one thing, *Gulrez* is not exactly a translation. The poet has taken certain liberties with this very ordinary love story. He seems to have disposed of certain episodes as irrelevant data. But he has invested it with glowing descriptions and lyrical poetry and planted the story in Kashmiri soil, embellishing it with the beautiful environment of this paradise on earth. Apart from that transplantation, the factor that saves *Gulrez* from the customary mediocrity of most *masnavis* is its exquisite poetry, the note of passion which reverberates through all the poet's creations. A certain

freshness is vibrant throughout.

Tharyan pyath kyaah vwozulý gulhaayi anaar
Tsalaan bulbul kulyan pyath maa hyotun naar

His second *masnavi*, *Grees Naama* is the first satiric composition in Kashmiri. It is a telling satire on the Kashmiri farmer.

The exquisite songs that have endeared themselves to everybody are legion. To give just two of them here :

- *Vesiye gulan aavai bahaar*
  Az saala antan baala yaar

- *Tulakhnaa parda mastaanai*
  Vwolo bedarda jaanaanai

Prakash Ram (Bhat) of Devasar (d 1885) is the author of *Ramavtaar Charit*, *Lava Kusha Charit*, *Krishnavataar*, *Aka Nandun* and *Shiv Lagan*, but the manuscripts of the last two are untraceable. The first has been written on the lines of *Adhyaatma Ramayana* making it more an allegory than an epic, with Rama not only the hero of the epic but also an *avataar* of Vishnu. What is more, he has introduced his own additions and amendments, e.g. the induction of Sita's wicked sister-in-law and some episodes not mentioned in *Valmiki* or *Adhyaatma*. There is also a plethora of *leelas* (devotional songs) some of which are not suitably inserted.

Though this *masnavi* is certainly inferior to Parmanand's narratives, there are points that make it an important milestone:

- It is the first *razmia* (war) *masnavi* in Kashmiri literature.
- The style is simple, as is the language too. It has not been, as Prof Kaul observes, overweighted

either by Sanskrit or Perso-Arabic vocabulary, a remarkable feature found only in Maqbool Kraalawaari's *Grees Naama*.

- He is not verbose or repetitive. Only the Ahilyaa episode has been repeated.
- Its greatest merit is the excellent songs on the beauty of nature. This gives it local colour. It would appear he has really 'transplanted' the spring of Kashmir in far away Lanka, as the following lines would show:

Aav bahaar bol bulbulo
Son vwolo barayo shaadee
Kaav, kumir beyi poshinoolo
Aay naalaan zan faryaadee
Badv vwondukÿ gum, gwosa galo
Son vwolo barayo shaadee.

Among the other poets who wrote during this period are : Abdul Ahad Nazim of Bijbehara. Most of his poems cannot be traced. He has written ghazals, *vatsan* and a *masnavi*, *Zain-ul-Arab*, apart from a few satires. Azad says he didn't have a distinct identity, being largely speaking a versifier in the wake of others, desperately trying to fashion his *ghazals* after Rasul Mir ; Sayyed Ali Khan, well-known for his popular *masnavi*, *Khadeeh Naamuk* ; Akram Baqal Dardmand, author of *Mehr-u-Maah, a masnavi* in simple Kashmiri ; Shah Ibrahim who wrote between 1886 and 1899 ; Mahda Shah Deeka, the satirist; Hasan Shah Khoihaami who was basically a historian; Hasan Ganai who wrote *ghazals*, *na'ats* and songs; Anwar Vaar; Mehdi Traali ; and Asad Shah.

Bazmia Masnavis-II

The second phase of *masnavis* gives us love stories. Though this kind of narrative verse has been there in

Kashmir before *Heemaal-Naagiraay* and *Gulrez* were written, the love stories presented by the poets in this period are generally translations from other languages. Some, however, are the products of the poet's own imagination. And almost all *naamaas*, like Haqqani's *Derveshnaama* and *Sahlaabnaama*, are not borrowed plumes.

Pir Mohi-ud- din Miskeen of Kulgam (d 1915) was a lover of solitude, but as a *pir* he had to visit places outside the valley, including Punjab, to impart instruction to his *mureeds*. He wrote six *masnavis* — *Yusuf Zuleikha, Zebaa Nigaar* and *Laal Majnoon* (all translated from Persian). His *Mussadas-i-Haali* is a translation of Abdul Gaffar Faarig's composition in Urdu. He tried ghazals too, endeavouring to emulate Rasul Mir, but they are seriously devoid of passion, packed only with sorrow, separation and despair. His language is heavily Persianized, in which he has followed in the wake of Mahmood Gami. However, he deserves credit for being the first to consider classics written in Indian languages too, including Punjabi , worthy of translation, thus breaking the growing belief that nothing worthwhile existed outside Persian literature.

Haji Mohi-ud-din Miskeen of Srinagar (d 1921), whose *Tareekh-i-Kabeer* is a history of Kashmir in Persian, has written two *masnavis-Yusuf Zuleikha* and *Waamaq Azra*. The first is a translation of Jami's *masnavi* of this title, which makes it different from Mahmood Gami's work of the same title, for the latter only borrowed the material from Jami. His language is simpler than his namesake's.

Khwaja Abdul Razak of Shahabad, a lesser-known contemporary of Pir-Mohi-ud-din Miskeen, translated Ahad Ullah Islaamaabadi's Persian *masnavi* of the romance of Abdul Aziz of Turkistan and an Indian girl, Kaamraan. The language, as expected, is heavily Persianized.

Safayi of Devasar wrote a long *masnavi, Rozate Alahbaab*.

Abdul Rahim Aima (d 1911) of Nagam, a village at the

base of the Banihal range, was blinded by smallpox. Gifted with a ready wit from childhood and very fond of poetical dialogues, he participated in *mushairas* with full verve. His *Gulbadan* is a translation of Muhammad Ali Murad's Urdu *masnavi* of this title. He wrote a large number of *na'ats* and other poems. His language is not so heavily Persianized.

Kaafee Shah of Kotahaar (d 1910) wrote a romantic *masnavi*, *Qissa Behraam Shah* and also some ghazals.

Abdul Qaadir Faarig, father of ex-Chief Minister, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, translated *Yusuf Zuleikha*, *Mullanaama* and Hadi's *Mussadas*. He also wrote a number of ghazals.

Aziz Ullah Haqqaani of Narparistan, Srinagar (1854-1919) was seized with wanderlust at the age of 27 and this took him to far flung places like Yarkand, Ladakh, NWFP, Ajmer and Bombay, which inevitably widened his mental horizon. He was very fond of music and was a rare combination of two seemingly opposite personal ties — a practising *sufi* and a poet of love romances. The poet Azad mentions him as a man with a distinct individuality. He was a prolific writer and his compositions ranged from *masnavis* to *na'ats* and history. His *masnavis* are *Jauhar-i-ishq*, *Qissa Benazir*, *Guldasta Benazir*, *Gulban Ishq Maahroy-i-Gul Andaam*, *Chiraag -i-Mahfil*, *Mumtaz Benazir* and *Chandarbadan*. His other *masnavis* in a different strain are *Jung-i-Iraaq Rozatul Shuhuda* and *Qissa-i-Dushnaan*.

He has also given a portrait of the times in *Sahlaabnaama* (the ravage wrought by the floods), *Aatishnaama* (the story of fire), *Bahaarnaama* (the story of spring) and *Darveshnaama* (satire on the self-styled dervishes). His best-known *masnavi* is *Mumtaaz Benazir*, which attained the same popularity as Maqbool Kraalawaari's *Gulrez*, displaying a unique style in his narrative. The *masnavi* has six parts and various metres. Adhering to the normal convention, he has interspersed the narrative with numerous ghazals. Though the

language is heavily Persianized, the narrative is not laboured but moves with great ease. Some of his ghazals and songs, though couched in the traditional style with the same old metres, stock images and artifice, are not devoid of romantic passion and a memorable phrase as can be seen below :

roshi tul pariyav josh zer-o-bam kuy
osh aav gama kuy tsol aama taav
ahli haavasan kor rosh jaami jamukuy
osh aav gama kuy tsol aama taav.

Saif-ud-din Ariz of Pulwama wrote a number of ghazals and songs and, according to Azad, a *masnavi* entitled *Nav Bahaar*, which had been translated into Persian. Unfortunately the manuscript has not been traced so far.

Akbar Bhat of Islamabad (d 1910) was a peasant and a disciple of the poet Naazim. He wrote some good poems like *Makkar-i-Zan, Vudar Naama and Mutta Haanzaný.* He roamed as a *faqir* all over the valley for two years and after this peregrination wrote the poem *Saalgaah.*

Vishna Kaul of Kulgam (d 1917), a teacher and a mystic who loved solitude, translated Valmiki's *Ramayana* and wrote some poems in Persian also.

Mohammad Ismail Nami of Kavador in Srinagar (1884-1940) who used to visit Tibet every year wrote *Tibet Safarnaama* in Persian and *Magaazi-al-nabee* and *Sheereen Khusro* in Kashmiri.

Haji Mohammad Alyaas of Tsrar (1881-1941) was born in a *rishi* family who have been called *haajis* for a few generations. Buoyant and debonair in early life, he was stricken with permanent sorrow when his son died very young. His *masnavis* are *Mumtaaz Benazir, Makkar Zan* and *Khanjar-i- Ishq.* He also wrote *ghazals* and *na'ats.*

Darvesh Pir Abdul Qadir (1897-1946) of Khwoja Bazaar, Srinagar wrote a *masnavi, Yusuf Zuleikha* of which

he himself was proud. He also wrote ghazals, one of which is written in the manner of Mahjoor's *Subah chhum baag chhum* :

tatsar chhum josh chhum loluk matsar chum,
dod baavun chhum
sanyomut daag chhum manz baag seenas,
suy me haavun chhum

Mir Ali Shah of Khoihaama wrote in the *masnavi* form a satire on Maharaja Pratap Singh's government.

Haarat Paandaaný of Paandan near the Jama Masjid (d 1968) was a great lover of music, particularly classical music, so much so that each poem of his is in a particular *muquaam* (*raaga*), as for example the following poem is in *Navroz-i-Sabaa* :

vana kas vananai roodum pheraan
neraan me chhum na aadanuk shreh

He was awarded the robe of honour by the Cultural Academy in 1962. Incidentally, his *masnavi, Raanaa-u-Zebaa* is the last *masnavi* written in this age.

Razmia Masnavis (War Poems)

There is quite an impressive list of *razmia* (war) *masnavis* in Kashmiri, though their literary merit is not high. All of them were written, however, after Lakshman Raina wrote his *Saamnaama*. The basic desire that led to Persian war narratives being rendered in Kashmiri was perhaps, as Naji Munawar says, to instil a feeling of nationalism or to show that Kashmiri poets could show their mettle in this field too. I personally feel it is the second reason.

Lakshman Joo Raina Bulbul (1812 -1898) was from Malapora, Srinagar. He had his education in a *maktab* and a *paathshaalaa*, and one gets an idea of his childhood

from his poem, *Desha Vaaraag*. Early in life, he looked after his father's shop till his parents' death after which he visited Delhi, Mathura and Calcutta and on his return, shifted to Naagom where he got married. Soon he lost his wife and wanderlust seized him again and he roamed about in the valley, and eventually landed at Mattan, where he met Parmanand and became his disciple. He persuaded him to return to Naagom where he got married again. Bulbul was quite proficient in Persian and his first poetical compositions were in that language, which he used later too. In fact, his elegy on the death of Queen Victoria for which he was awarded a prize, was in Persian. It is remarkable that though he used Persianized Kashmiri his poems show that Kashmiri can assimilate a foreign language without acquiring an incongruous expression. His language has a natural flow.

He has left us two very well-known *masnavis*, a *razmia* (war) *masnavi* entitled *Saamnaama* and a *bazmia* (romance) *masnavi* entitled *Nal-o-Daman* ; two poems, *Chaai Naamaa* and *Om Naamaa*, both in the *masnavi* style, the former dwelling on the virtues of a cup of tea - he was very fond of *sheerý chaai* (tea with salt) - and the latter on the greatness of the sacred syllable 'Om'; some *leelaas* (*bhakti* songs) and ghazals. The *bhakti* songs are in the *vatsan* form, like *Sri Rama Gita* :

Mo maan maan avamaan
Zaan kar poz apuz zaan
Paana rostuy tsu swar paan
Rama, Rama, Rama, karýze

One of his ghazals has become an anthology piece :

Yaaradaade yats dovum
Taapai dodum taalyun vesee.

But he is known mostly for his *masnavis*, which are his greatest contribution to Kashmiri poetry. *Saamnaama*

is a translation of the Persian poet Firdausi's famous classic, *Shaahnaama.* Wahab Pare and Kreeree too have translated the same *masnavi*, but Bulbul's rendering is a class apart. Their language is stilted, while Bulbul's is normal with a smooth flow. While they have adopted the same metre as in the original *Shaahnaama* (*tagaarib bahar)* in their couplets, Bulbul puts his poem in a different metre and makes his narrative more effective with coherence and unity, omitting several incidents in the original. It does not remain a translation but emerges as an adaptation and becomes one of the few good *masnavis* in Kashmiri. The theme of his *bazmia masnavi, Nal-o-Daman*, is borrowed from the *Mahabharata* and is equally successful and has an even simpler language, having imagery with a local colour :

Tamis deeshith galan Nal sheenatral zan
achhiv kiný khoon haaraan rood zan

There are impressive descriptive passages in both the *masnavis*, as for example this one about Makokaal in *Saamnaama*:

kalas pyath hyang zan raayil palas pyath
langav pyathý lang draamutý raahilas pyath
ba soorath gooly kaatsur machhi techal
phiraan achhý drenth yivaan naara vuzumal
kwokar seenuch vudar tas seena tai vachh
katshavaal aasý haapath naarukuy kachh .

Wahab Pare of Hajin (1846-1914) has a two-fold distinction. First, he was the busiest man in the world with his mundane pursuits and preoccupations. Second, he takes the cake in most of his compositions being most voluminous - *Shahnaama* (23,491 verses), *Sultani* (11,753 verses), et al. He excels mainly in *razmia masnavi*, translating from the Persian originals. His first book, *Akbar Naama* is a translation of Hamid Ullah

Shaahabaadi's *masnavi* of the same title, dealing with the wars that raged from 1833 to 1845, fought by the Pathan, Sikh and British armies. It is a meticulously faithful translation, as also is *Shaahnaama*. There are telling descriptions of wrestling, tournaments and the fury and anger one finds in all mortal combat, particularly in the one between Sohrab and Rustum. The other translations are *Chahaar Dervesh*, *Baharaam Gor* and *Sultaani*, the last being a translation of several Persian originals. There is also *Naunihaal-i-Gulbadan*, a translation from Urdu.

His original compositions are *Haft kissa-i-Makri zan*, *Sahlaabnaama* (about the devastation caused by the floods). *Beboojnaama* (about the chaotic condition of the times). *Haft kissa-i-Ami* and *Derveshi*, a *masnavi* on contemporary saints,*faqirs* and learned men. His ghazals do not inspire much confidence, having nothing more than a facile technique and sadly wanting in depth. There are some poems too, including one on the Holy Prophet. His *Dewan-i-Wahab* is an alphabetically arranged set of compositions which show his mastery of technique. Some of these poems reflect the social change with the coming of the western dress, brown shoes, *shikaras* and house boats.

Amir Shah Kreeri (1846-1905) of Kreer village was not only a contemporary of Bulbul and Wahab Pare but also an intimate friend. Like Bulbul, he also translated the *Saamnaama* part of Firdausi's *Shaahnaama* and,as has already been pointed out, the two translations are quite different, and like Pare's his is as meticulously faithful. Apart from this, his other *razmia masnavis* are *Jang-i-Khaavaar* (translation of Ibu Ahsam's *Khaavarnaama)* and *Jang-i-Algam*. One might also mention his poem, *Meraji Ahmadi*, *Anwaar-i-Mohammadi* and *Aajaaz-i-Sarmadi*. He wrote in the *rekhta* style. Death claimed him before he could complete his *Khaavarnaama*. This was done by his son, Qabul Shah (1869-1930) who also wrote several *na'ats* in addition.

Muzaffar Shah (1867-1935), also from Kreer, translated *Jang-i-Mukhtaar* into Kashmiri. His language is very much like Ameer Shah's.

Pir Ghulam Mohammad Hanfi (1849-1937) is a prolific writer mainly of narrative poetry. It is said that the Kashmiri translation of the *Quraan* which was published under the name of Maulvi Yusuf Shah was actually done by Hanfi. His *Jang Ameer Hamzaa* is his best composition. His effort to save Kashmiri from being engulfed by Persian is creditable.

Ali Shah of Haral (Handawara), who is supposed to have died at the ripe old age of 116 years in 1935 wrote his various *jangnaamaas — Jang-i-Zen-ul-Ahrab, Jang-i-Imaam Hanaf, Jang-i-Zaitoon, Jang-i-Taal, Jang-i-Khaibar,* to name only the main ones.

Bhakti and Sufi Poets

Apart from the Trika Shaivite tradition (mentioned in Chapter II) there is the *bhakti* tradition in Kashmir. It is in two forms, either adoration of the non-personal God as in Kabir, or of the personal god (*ishtadish*) whose various manifestations or *leelas* (actions) form the topics of a long narrative poem, like Parmananda's *Radha Swayamvara* or Prakash Ram's *Ramavtarcharit*. The story is narrated in short poems of 4 *padas* each, the last being also the refrain, not conforming with the other three. It is very much like a *doha* of Hindi verse.

The other tradition that finds itself richly represented in the poetry of this period is the Sufi tradition, essentially Islamic in origin but blended in Kashmir with local Hindu thought and religion, so that the Sufi of Kashmir is different from others. In this period we find Mahmood Gami and others following in the wake of their forebears like Nunda Ryosh. Apart from the thematic content, there are two dominant traditions in terms of style — *vatsun* and *lol*, to both of which we have been introduced by Habba Khaatoon. *Vatsun*, used by Hindus and Muslims

alike on all festive and devotional occasions, is close to folk tradition and immensely popular. *Lol* is akin to the *geet* of Hindi and emphasizes *viraha* (longing and separation). The Sufi poets of Kashmir followed the Persian *masnavi* tradition, their romantic narratives adopting Persian mystical devices, and the stories being essentially allegorical, which is an attempt to underplay the ritualistic part of religion, emphasize the oneness of God and his manifestation in everything. Sufism is generally not acceptable to the orthodox Muslim.

Parmanand (1791-1885)

Parmanand of Mattan was born as Nand Ram, son of the *patwari*, Krishna Pandit. His native village where he was born, was the nearby Seer, where there was a shrine sacred to Saraswati to whom his devotion was phenomenal, so much so that his famous poem on the Amarnath pilgrimage begins thus:

Kan thaav Saraswati chhai vanan
(Listen, Saraswati is speaking to you)

Apart from his preceptor being his family guru, Mattan was a famous pilgrim centre situated on the way to Amarnath, and being there, contact with sadhus and pilgrims of diverse kinds was inevitable. It was a place not only full of the beauty of nature but also resplendent with spiritual life. He familiarized himself with Sanskrit *shlokas*, studied old *vaakh*, *vedanta*, Shaivite philosophy, the *Satchakra Upaasana* of *Kundalini yoga*, *Bhaagwat*, *Ram Leela*, *Krishna Leela*, *Shiv Puran*, *Mahabharata* and the *Granth Sahib*. He wrote a few poems in the Punjabi-Hindustani lingo, a code-mixed variety of Kashmiri (called *Bhakha*) which in his hands is most ungrammatical but interesting nevertheless. When he was 25, he succeeded his father as a *patwari* and was radiantly happy in his poverty, for he never accepted the usual bribes, much to

the dismay of his scolding wife, Malded.

Since a chronological ordering of his compositions is not possible, we can only class them thematically. Maybe the first group of *strotras* addressed to the Hindu gods and goddesses belong to the earliest period. Zinda Kaul places them at the lowest level, since they have neither exaltation nor revelation and are couched in the effete metaphor of contemporary love poetry. They are traditionally called *dinakraandan* (cries of a humble person). Each is a 4-lined stanza, the last being the refrain. Some have rhyming couplets too.

The second group of three poems is perhaps his most eminent contribution to Kashmiri poetry. All of them are about man's love of God and how God's love for man never wanes. *Radha Swayamvara* is the most musical of them, with 30 songs interspersed, though they don't have a direct relationship with the narrative, which serves as internal evidence that the poems were written during his earlier youthful period. The poem may thus be called a lyrical narrative. These songs which we call '*leela* lyrics' are devotional poems, sung at rituals and ceremonies and as lullabies. They are generally of the *vatsun* genre, having the same form, i.e. four-lined stanzas, the fourth line being the refrain. They emphasize in the typical Kashmiri Trika Shaivite tradition, 'the inward experience rather than outward formalism and prefer *bhoga* to *yoga*, enjoyment to renunciation'. (JL Kaul) There is no plaintive or sad note like the one found in Habba Khaatoon's poems. The note of ecstasy in them is new to Kashmiri poetry. The poet firmly believes that the universe is good, because it is the overflowing of God's joy:

aaras manz atsuvai
vigni zan natsuvai
laagos posh pooze
Krishnajoo nendri vuze
vwoparas kas patsuvay

(come, let us join in the ring
and dance like fairies.
Let us with flowers worship him
and wake up the Lord.
Whom can we trust but He?)

(tr. J.L. Kaul)

'In music and whole-hearted abandon and gaiety, the *leela* lyrics of Parmanand were surpassed by those of his successor, Krishna Razdan of Vanpoh; but no one has surpassed him in combining these qualities with depth of meaning and passionate intensity' (JL Kaul : *Parmanand*). The *leela* lyric beginning with the following line is characteristic of him at his best :

Kaasi yamabayi chon preyam ta lo lo
(Thy love casts out all fear of death)

In *Radha Swayamvara*, the very first stanza sums up the essence of the whole poem:

Gokal hridai myon tati chon goorý vaan
Tset vyamarsha deptamaana Bhagvaano.
Vrats myaani goopiyi tsey pata laaraan
Bansari naada vaad mataano
(Gokul is my heart where you tend your cows.
O Lord, radiant with the light of pure consciousness
My senses are the *gopis* whom the magic of your flute wafts to a higher plane)

The parenthetic analogy of the milkpots being broken and Yashoda chasing Krishna fruitlessly in the small compound and Krishna surrendering himself when she is tired, is pregnant with mystical meaning.

'God steals the milk of *bhakti*, for his hunger is insatiable; Buddhi tries to bind and delimit God, but learning cannot help her ever to form an image of Him, and, even though He is within her own heart, she can

not catch Him. But before a devotee, God surrenders himself ' (J.L. Kaul : *Parmanand*).

Sudama Charitra is a more mature work, having only two songs which, unlike in *Radha Swayamvara*, are deftly woven into the story. It is more objective in treatment. It has the most impressive beginning:

Gata tsaj ta gaash aav chaane zenai
Jai jai, jai jai Deevukee nandanai
(From darkness came forth light when you were born,
Hail, hail to thee, O Devaki's joy, all hail!)

The first line of the narrative emphasizes the basic theme that there is a bond of love between God and man:

Swodaamjeev os yaar Bhagwaanas
(Sudama was a friend of God)

This is reiterated towards the end (stanza 31 in Zinda Kaul's edition of *Paramanand*), when the poet talks not of the destitute Sudama but of a *raja*:

Swodaama raaza bov pananis nagras
(Raja Swodaama returned to his town)

This is just to emphasize that God never forgets any man. The beauty of the poem is that there is no superfluous line anywhere.

Shiv Lagan is the story of the self-immolation of Sati, her rebirth as Parvati, the daughter of king Himalaya and her marriage with Shiva. Parmanand, like Prakash Ram and Krishna Razdan who also have handled the same theme, has woven a folk legend into the story, where the comic element is provided by the priest, who is the go-between, and the first appearance of Shiva as the bridegroom. While in the other versions these touches verge on vulgarity, Parmanand has treated the incidents with gentle irony. However, this provides a realistic touch,

as the priest is a replica of the go-between that officiates at all Kashmiri Pandit weddings, who run from place to place hoping for a meal here and some payment there.

The allegory underlying the narrative is that Shiva would not be known except through Parvati, ie unless Shakti manifested Shiva, He would remain unknown. The idea has been poetized in a popular and deeply significant devotional Sanskrit poem, *Panchastavi*.

The next group is his didactic poems. The basic theme is *yoga abhyasa* (yogic practices and mystic symbolism). The poem on the Amarnath pilgrimage is most popular and famous. The stages of this pilgrimage from Srinagar to the famous cave symbolise the steps the yogic aspirant has to go through to attain realization. Everything seems familiar, the long road, the river, the towns and villages en route, till we come to the final stage where there is the famous stanza:

asta asta khasta pantsaalasuy
soohum bhaarav baalasuy
tuk yuthna lagee ati laala suy
man thir thav poozun prabhoo
(see that you do not falter
On Bhairav Baal, the last climb
before you reach the cave
steady your mind and worship the Lord)

In *Karmabhoomikaayi*, there is a welding of a farmer's duties with the aspirant's sadhana. The following is significant :

karmabhoomikaayi dizi darmuk bal
santoshi byaali bavi aananda phal
(Manure thy field of action
with the loam of righteousness,
then sow the seed of contentment
to reap thy crop of bliss)

Apart from the excellent allegory, the poem provides a view of rural Kashmir.

Then there is another group which includes poems with philosophic and Vedantic topics. "These have been considered", says Zinda Kaul, "as the ripest fruit of his old age and matured wisdom and as the meditation of a *jeevamukta* (one who has attained freedom from the cycle of life and death)". One might mention the following lines as an excellent example of the style of this group of poems :

gindunaah chhu zinda marun
sahaz praav patshe
sham ta dam naa gatshe
paana rost paan sworun

(To seek unity with God is to venture forth and hazard all, to experience death in life and be reborn into the higher self within. Not by control of mind and senses but renouncing self and ever intent, thou wilt come to the selfless self by faith devout).

The remarkable characteristic of his poetry is the sustained use of symbol and allegory, which is without doubt the language of all mystics. He did not have to seek abroad for the right images, but saw them all around him, like the common things of a farmer's life as in *Karmabhoomikaayi*. His narrative moved from episode to episode, scattering a wealth of idioms and images. One might end this assessment of the great poet with the tribute paid by 'Master' Zinda Kaul: "Parmanand of Mattan easily surpasses all his known predecessors in the technique of metre and rhyme and all, excepting only Lalla, in mysticism. He is deeply devotional and highly philosophical and his didactic poems and even his psalms litanies have not been surpassed."

Rahman Daar, a well-known Sufi poet, lived at Chattabal, Srinagar. His date of birth is not known and there is a controversy about when he died - 1872-75 (Saqi),

1880 (Azad) and 1900 (Hajini). Azad maintains he was a contemporary of Mahmood Gami. A simple, sincere and honest soul, he lived the life of a *dervesh*.

As a poet, he is best remembered for his poem *Shash Rang*, one of the best in Kashmiri poetry, remarkable for its originality. It is a set of six eight-lined stanzas, each with the rhyme scheme *ab ab ab ab* which, for its metre and parallelism in rhymes was a rare technical feat in Kashmiri poetry. It has appealed to thousands of poets for more than a hundred years for its intense outpouring of a woman's love, its imagery, its forceful diction and local tradition. A woman's yearning in this poem is also the mystic's longing for God realization. Matter and spirit are closely related.

There are other well-known poems of merit written by him, e.g., *Kami soni rotnam yaar* and *Maachh Tulur* which is an allegory presenting a verse dialogue between the honey comb (soul), the honey bee (thought or intelligence) and the fly (desire). The basic faith of the poet is that all multitudinous creation is in essence the manifestion of a single and supreme reality.

Here are a few lines from *Shash Rang:*

paaman laajnas ratas daaman tai
gyoolnam kuli aalaman
dapas tani mutsar jaaman tai
tath chhum na rwoy saman
satan zarman me chhu darman tai
vasal chhum saatan

And these from one of his ghazals :

kenh chhee deeda ta kenh shaneeda,
kenh chhee pareshaan,
kenh chhee az haal pemutý ta gaamutý
aksas kenh laaraan

Shamas Faqir (1849-1904) was a prince of the mystical poets of the 19th century. His real name was Mohammad Sidiq Bhat. At the age of 12 his father who was a weaver in a carpet factory put him also in a factory at Zaindar Mohalla in Srinagar, as an apprentice. It was the same factory where Nema Saab was already a weaver, and introduced him to Swochha Maliyaar, his spiritual mentor. Shamas also received instruction from a number of sufis— Abdul Rahman of Barzul, Attiqulla of Kalai Andar, Rasul Shah and Mohammad Jamal-ud-din of Gulab Bagh. He spent four years in the company of the latter and had the highest respect for Abdul Rahman throughout his life. When he was 25, he visited Amritsar, where he met a wandering monk who must have influenced him greatly. On his return to the valley, he stayed at Anantnag where he got married. This was followed by spending six months in meditation in a cave at Qazi Bagh near Badgam. Finally he returned and moved permanently to Chinkral Mohalla in Srinagar.

This uncommon mode of acquiring knowledge that suited his predisposition and instinct, and growing up from the beginning in the environment of the *Qaaḍari* tradition of *sufism* made up largely for his lack of formal education in schools, cleansing his mind as a fit receptacle for the spiritual material that was to be the fountain head of his mystical verse.

The fifty or sixty poems which have been published so far are so moving that most people remember them by heart and love to hear them put to music. Unfortunately a complete manuscript of all his poems is still not available.

His poetry shows without doubt a superb mastery of the medium, and his limited output shows abundant richness and effortless experimentation with metre, form and rhyme. But above all, his poems reveal a mystic of deep spiritual insight. 'He was a saint poet in the best tradition of Kashmir's synthesis of sufism and Hindu mysticism, and in him we find various references and

allusions to "*Shastra*" as we call it, not in a strained but in an effortless manner. There is in him the quality that makes mystic poetry, the quality of intense sincerity, of passion and abandon and, what is more, the authentic insight of the true mystical experience and realization. This is seen in all his poems, particularly *Shinyaa Gatshithuy, Shastur Polum Shastur Golum and Zaatas Sifaatas Chhai Milavan.*' (J L Kaul : *Studies in Kashmiri*)

Some of his verses are given below :

Shunyaa gatshithuy os myon oluy
amý ashka naaran zolaye
kuniras trovnam rwoni manzoluy
Shroný shroný bozaan aas

These are the opening lines of the first of the poems mentioned above. The following are some of the most popular lines favourite with the professional singers too:

Haa ashka tsooro rashka karthus devaana tai
panun aasith kyaazi loguth begaana tai

Kyaazi logthus askha tandoora lo lo
tsoori mo tsal yaavan tsoora lo lo

Zaalý panjarai traav vathiye
myon vantas latiye

Asad Pare (1862-1920) of Hajin was a sufi poet whose only published work, a long poem entitled *Par Sahraali* does not have much literary merit.

Mohammad Siraaj (d 1918), a resident of Zaina Kadal, Srinagar was a friend and disciple of the well-known sufi poet, Waaza Mohammad of Nawab Bazaar, Srinagar who would have remained completely unknown but for Abdul Jabaar Khan's initiative in tracing and copying his manuscript. His ghazals have flawless metre and rhyme. Only his vice of making them exceptionally long (above

50 verses), with the conventional desire to put in a different thought in every verse, militates against poetic excellence.

Habibullah Zargar, a goldsmith of Khwoja Bazaar Srinagar, who died when he was only 35, tried to emulate Rasul Mir in his ghazals.

Ali Mohammad Ganai Ashiq of Traal, who became the first teacher of the poet Mahjoor, wrote *masnavis* — *Zahar ta Bahraam, Gulzaar-i-Hasan, Izzat Naamaa and Noor Maal* — and songs and *ghazals*. He died at 68 in 1328-H.

Ghulam Mustafa Shah of Ropavan (where Nunda Ryosh lived many years), was a *pir* and led a clean life. Most of his poems are not traceable.

Siddiq Ullah Hajini (1832-1900) composed mainly religious verse, the chief titles being *Mugaa-ul-Nabi* and *Maajazaat-i-Rasul*.

Abdul Ahad Nadim (1258-1329 H) of Bandapor wrote *na'ats*, a poem on the Prophet's personality and a social satire entitled *Shaharaashob*, exposing the weaknesses of society with the hollowness of *pirs*, religious leaders and *muftis*. But he is pre-eminent in his *na'ats* which, apart from being rich in passionate devotion, reverence, striking allusions from the *Quran* and in remarkably simple language, are in the rhythm of the *vanavun*, i.e. songs written to be sung on weddings and other festive occasions. Putting the *na'at* in this form was breaking new ground, and he has been unequalled in this art :

Arabee shaahaa madanee maahaa
asi gotsh gati manz gaashaa chon
maahaa taareef chonuý taa haa
asi gotsh gati manz gaashaa chon

Ghulam Rasul Nazki tells us how it began on a night when Nadim lay sleepless because of a severe inflammation of his eyes in early youth. There was a wedding next door with *vanavun* in full swing. That

inspired him to sway with the rhythm and compose his first *na'at*. Incidentally, he was from an educated family which produced many poets and the well-known historian, Hasan.

Krishna Razdan (c 1850-1925) of Vanpoh village was a scholar of Sanskrit and a mystic with a firm faith in Shaivism. He belonged not chronologically but thematically to the period of mystical and *masnavi* poetry. He was an ardent disciple of Parmanand and in his two best known narratives, *Shiv Puran* and *Shiv Lagan* shows the profound influence of the master. But he steps beyond in many ways. Both these poems show how he practised realism in both language and narrative. His use of the Kashmiri idiom and proverbs is impeccable :

ganda ganda chham me aamyan pananui
var dim me yandra chhukh dayaal

•

chhambas pyath chhukh tsalaan me saavith
kas gokh traavith hai Shamboo

He has made the marriage ceremony in heaven (of Shiva and Parvati) look exactly like a normal wedding down below in the valley, with the same type of wedding songs. The remarkable thing about him was that whatever he observed around him became the material for his poetry. He put in the divine message but did not change the fabric. Thus obscure images and mystical allusions are rarely noticeable in his poetry.

"In spite of being a philosophical and religious poet," says Azad, "he never chose esoteric themes and notions, but made his language of the earth, earthy. His *bhajans* and *leelas* could naturally not be in the highly Persianized Kashmiri."

The beauty of his poetry is not only his mystical vision but also the choice of the right word in any context, his ability to transmute any ordinary expression and make

it convey more than it ordinarily does. But more than other traits, there is superb music in his lines, a gift unequalled by anybody so far. Though he was a mystic, he was far from being a recluse, a cloistered saint advocating ascetic virtues. He never believed in or advocated *tyaaga* (renunciation) but *bhoga* (enjoyment):

asý kami baapath karav tyaag
asi gastshi aasun Krishna raag
suy gav taph ta yoga abhyaas
pakiv raas gindaane.
(Why should one renounce life?
For all we need is love of God
Which itself is *tapas* and *yoga abhyaas*)

He had, like Parmanand, whole-hearted abandon. And he made his poems ring with verbal melody and the music of the joy of life. His narratives are written in couplets, with sometimes a refrain thrown in. His *leelas* and *bhajans* are more like *vatsan*, and the light heartednesss of his temper belies the underlying profundity of his mystical vision. He made his lines ring with music. In fact he surpassed Parmanand in this quality, while the latter still remains the greatest mystic after Lal Ded.

Before we close, let us have a look at some of his popular songs:

Nandalal aav gindane raas
aara karive aarai
(Nandalal has come to dance;
come, let's all form a ring)

deehi daarikayi manz aarai
vuchhive khelavum raas
daari mutsarith nau daarai
aara karive aarai
(observe the eternal dance

in the mansion of your mortal frame
with all its nine windows open)

samiv karav athavaas
pakiv raas gindaane
(Let's all join, hand in hand
in this dance of life)

yath baala paanas dimav tshohaa
yuthui dohaa ganeemath
saasas yoogas karav saas
pakiv raas gindaane
(Gather rose buds of life now
for blest are the days of youth
and a thousand eras dance away)

She ryeth saanpuný kunee raath
goopee naath natsani log
vahar doh gav ta pahar maas
pakiv raas gindaane
(Six months flow like a single night,
a year as a day, a month as an hour
when the Lord of Gopis began his dance)

bel tai maadal vena golaab pamposhi dastai
poozaayi laagas Parma Sheevas Shivanaathas tai

The beauty of these lines, which are untranslatable, lies in the quintessence of fragrant leaves and beautiful flowers with which the poet wants to worship *Param Shiva*.

Others of this period who attempted sufi poetry are Laala Tantre of Ganderbal, Ramzan Bhat (1887-1918) who wrote *Aka Nandun*, Ahmad Batawari (1845-1918) whose allegorical poem *Nai* (The Flute) is rich in mystical symbolism, Anwar Shupiyaani (1853-1938), Hasan Shah Bedal of Traal who wrote *ghazals* and *na'ats* , Anvar Mir of Hakura (d 1930) who wrote *ghazals* and *masnavis*, and Ahmad Rah of Dalgate, Srinagar.

5

The Modern Age

Formative Years (1925-1948)

Before we enter the 20th century, the most momentous period in the history of Kashmiri literature, a recapitulation would be necessary.

The 19th century saw the growth and influence of Persian language and poetry in Kashmir. Persian, which continued to be the official and court language for over 400 years, acquired the status of the language of culture and considerably influenced and enlarged Kashmiri vocabulary. In poetry, quantitative rhythm and metre gradually replaced the indigenous qualitative, i.e, accentual metre. New forms were imported from Persian literature. These included the ghazal, the *masnavi*, the *naat* and the *marsiya* - all Persian in form, metre and language. This was accompanied by a wholesale borrowing of Persian epithets, figures of speech and themes. Since the writers in this tradition were by and large second-rate poets, their poems betray a remarkable lack of freshness and originality in subject matter, language and poetic diction. It may be said that cultural strangulation was as near completion as possible by the end of the 19th century.

Kashmiri poetry existed largely speaking in oral tradition upto 1930. Since the manuscripts of all that

was written never saw publication, access to past literature was difficult. With the notable exception of Habba Khaatoon and possibly Arnimaal, the poet had no direct relationship with the ruling class. On the contrary he was more intimate with the common man, and often came from the same stock. Those who were from the aristocracy were more attracted by Persian, which by virtue of being the court language was a passport to social recognition. The poet thus wrote largely for an illiterate class. Furthermore, continued tyranny under the Afghan and Sikh rule led to widespread frustration, from which only mystical poetry derived any sustenance. In the case of the lesser poets, mysticism became a necessary and fashionable attitude, and they dabbled in mystical symbols without having had any mystical experience. As Firaq points out, if you remove the two themes which the poets had restricted themselves to — i.e. mysticism and love — Kashmiri poetry disappears. A number of *jang naamas* or war poems were written, but they were "more war than poetry". The only poems that really reached the people were devotional verse in both Hindu and Muslim tradition, satirical ballads called *ladi shah*, dance songs for women called *rov*, and songs written only to be set to the popular *chhakree* music.

Literary stagnation thus went hand in hand with political humiliation as a result of continued rule by outsiders. Effete traditions, now grown more than stale, persisted. The worn symbolism of the *gul* and the *bulbul* was used with sickening re-iteration in poem after poem, and drained themes were droned in ever the same manner year after year. The Muse fell asleep with the death of Parmanand in 1885, which marks the end of an era of great poets like Mahmood Gami and Rasul Mir. One doesn't find anything of merit in the *razmia* or war poems of Muzaffar Shah Kreeri, Ghulam Mohammad Hanfi and Neel Kanth Sharma or the *masnavis* of Mohammed Shaban Dar, Mohammad Ismail Naami or Lasa Khan.The mystical poets who continued with traditional form and

content are Ahmed Pare, Ahad Zargar and Samad Mir. With the dawn of the 20th century, the poet Pir Aziz Ullah Haqqani(d.1928) felt the need to Kashmirize poetic diction, but because of the shackles of old practice, he didn't achieve much. Stereotyped forms like the *ravaani nazam* continued.

Yet all these years Kashmir stood on the threshold of a new era. Various historical and political forces led to the end of the isolation of feudal Kashmir. The building of two cart roads linking the valley with the rest of India made it possible for tourists to come here and young Kashmiris to go outside for higher studies. Contact with progressive forces in India and the powerful impact of the freedom struggle in the country created a new ferment in the minds of the intelligentsia and an awakening in the souls of men. In spite of the best efforts of the Maharaja to stem the tide, these forces continued to simmer and socio-political changes were inevitable. At the same time, the sudden switch over from Persian to Urdu as the court language in the beginning of the century ended the dominance of Persian and made the middle classes develop a keen interest in Urdu and English. The publication of *Lalla Vaakh* by Grierson and Brunt in 1920 and of the first Kashmiri dictionary by Grierson in 1924 encouraged some educated young men to devote more attention to their mother tongue and burn with a sense of shame that this language had suffered from neglect for centuries. With the development of a sense of identity and a changed and freer environment, old literary forms and themes needed radical reform.

The pioneers of the new age were *Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor* (1885-1952) and *Abdul Ahad Azad* (1909-1948). With them came into Kashmiri poetry a certain morning freshness and imagination, and a sweetness of diction. They freed Kashmiri from heavy Persian influence and discarded old forms like *pad* and *ravaani nazam*. It is ironical that though Mahjoor's poems attained great popularity, he had to be discovered by the poet Tagore,

who called him 'the Wordsworth of Kashmiri poetry', before he was accepted by the 'educated class' as an artist and not a mere rustic rhymester. After his initial attempts at writing in Persian and Urdu, he realized that his artistic fulfilment would come only if he wrote in his own mother tongue, which he passionately loved. As a *patwari*, which he remained throughout his life, he had the opportunity of seeing almost every nook and corner of Kashmir and come into intimate contact with the people and know their joys and sorrows. He also saw that the only poetry that had succeeded in enduring was folk poetry and what was written by great masters of the lyric like Habba Khaatoon, Arnimaal, Mahmood Gami and Rasul Mir and certainly not what smelt of the lamp and was influenced by or a slavish imitation of the effete mysticism, stylized imagery and stale epithets of decadent Persian poetry. His greatest contribution was to make Kashmiri as a poetic medium more natural and to strive untiringly to popularize it. Abdul Satar Aasi, who was a coolie writing in Persian, started writing in Kashmiri at his insistence in 1942. He had already persuaded Abdul Ahad Azad in 1935 to switch over from Urdu to the neglected mother tongue, and he was delighted to find a kindred spirit in Mirza Ghulam Hassan Beg Arif. It is significant that all the major poets of the modern age, including Zinda Kaul and Nadim, gave up their early devotion to Urdu and Persian and started writing in Kashmiri in the forties. This Kashmir owes to the ceaseless efforts of Mahjoor. "There are thousands who write in Persian," he wrote, "only Kashmiri remains a helpless, neglected language".

Mahjoor was a lover of life, with his eyes laved in the living hues of nature. He didn't brood over life's impermanence and death. He wasn't a mystic or a recluse, he wasn't interested in politics, he wasn't interested in religion, as was clear from his refusal to follow his father's priestly profession, for his essentially catholic mind was opposed to bigotry and fanaticism which are often the unfortunate concomitants of organised religion. As a poet,

he moved closer to nature. Reviving the lyrical tradition of Rasul Mir, he enlarged his canvas to include new themes and new rhythms and steeped his poems in the living hues of spring and summer in Kashmir. To the simplicity, softness and music of Habba Khaatoon, Arnimaal and Gami he added colour, form and beauty. But, like Rasul Mir, he never wrestled with the profound questionings of the human soul. "His poems", says Zinda Kaul, "are like a beautiful lotus in bloom. The depths are unknown to him". He had an unfailing instinct for the right word, if by the right word we mean the purely musical word. As a matter of fact he resembles Swinburne in more than one way: in him, as in Swinburne, words do sometimes seem to lack the divine necessity of expression; there is a straining after music for its own sake - a weakness (Arif calls it *saarang nawazi*, i.e slavery to music) which one finds in most poets who compose verse mainly for music.

Mahjoor stands as a link between old and new poetry. But for him, we wouldn't be able to understand the modern age in literature. In spite of the rejuvenation of Kashmiri poetry that he was responsible for, he remained to some extent a blend of traditionalism and experiment. His was not the attitude of outright revolt. While he discarded stylised love, foreign symbols and the sights and sounds of Arabia, he retained the symbolism of the *gul* and the *bulbul* throughout his poetical career. Living close to the people he couldn't escape the impact of popular urges and new values. After his earlier phase, i.e about the middle of the thirties, he did realise that the conventional fountains had almost run dry, and that the only thing that would give life and vitality to his verse was a new theme. But whether he became the voice and head priest of the modern age is highly debatable, and this we shall consider when we discuss the developments after 1947.

Abdul Ahad Azad was a poor teacher languishing in a village primary school. He began writing in Urdu in the

romantic tradition under the pen name 'Ahad', which he later changed to 'Janbaaz', and finally to 'Azad'. These three pseudonyms divide his poetry into three significant periods of his evolution as a poet — the first that of juvenile verse, the second that of love lyrics and the third that of poems of a socio-political content. Though he met Mahjoor and started writing in Kashmiri in 1935, there is no evidence in his poetry of any other abiding influence of Mahjoor. Both sought for the rejuvenating waters of the spirit, but Azad felt that a genuine renewing must have its origin in vast moral and social changes and a broadening of the consciousness. While Mahjoor was moving like a shuttle cock between religious humanism and modernism, Azad courageously preached scientific humanism; while Mahjoor was committed to no political ideology, Azad's ideological commitment was deep. Naturally his handling of the themes one finds in Mahjoor too is very different, as you find for example in his *Dariyaav* (The River) and *Inqilaab* (Revolution). After 1931 his literary influences were Iqbal and the progressive writers as far as spirit, forcefulness and technique are concerned. Politically he remained a Radical Marxist throughout his life. He was strongly affected by political suffering, but was never convinced of the purposefulness of the political movement in Kashmir at that time. He may truly be called the first rebel, a lone forerunner of revolutionary ideas and a poet of deep intellectual conviction. He was the first poet to enlarge his canvas to include new themes like religious fanaticism, social inequality and war and to champion the cause of the modern man and sing of universal brotherhood and peace. According to his biographer, Prem Nath Bazaz, 1931 (with the tragic death of his son) is a significant milestone in his intellectual development. He became a near agnostic as seen in his poem, *Shikwa-i-Iblees* (Satan's Complaint). J L Kaul calls it a *nazam*, a poem longer than a ghazal, though with the ghazal *radeef* (end rhyme) and a unity of theme, and secondly, a boldly revolutionary poem. This

poem was considered blasphemous by the orthodox Muslims, and there was talk of issuing a *fatwa* against the poet, and even Mahjoor and Arif tried to persuade him to retrace his steps and come on the old conventional path, but his answer was :

> O men of faith, you have your own *deen*, and I have mine.
> Your sacred object is God and my ideal is Man.
> Your God is pleased by building temples, mosques, *dharamshalas*.
> My beloved feels delighted in unity, affection and sympathy.

The restlessness of the anarchist is clearly expressed in the later poetry of Azad, such as his *Dariyaav*, a stylistic experiment considered one of the best poems in Kashmir. His knack for diction, use of phonetic devices for semantic effect is innovative, as we find later in Nadim. "However" says Bazaz, "this singer of Renaissance, a great thinker of modern Kashmir and the poet of humanism died like an orphan, unwept, unhonoured and unsung". But before his death, he had made a prophetic statement :

> You will see, dear friend,
> A time will come when
> The world will remember
> Azad ! Azad !

It seems that, so far as his native Kashmir valley is concerned his prophecy has almost come true. Azad was also a pioneer in exploring Kashmiri language and literature. His valuable work, *Kashmiri Language and Poetry*, written in Urdu, was published posthumously by the J&K Cultural Academy.

Zinda Kaul (1884-1965) popularly known as "Masterji" started writing in Kashmiri only at the age of 58 in 1942. Earlier he had written only in Persian and

Urdu. He published only a slender volume of 35 poems entitled *Sumaran* (The Rosary), which won him the Sahitya Akademi award for 1956. All these poems belong to his period of maturity and are philosophical and devotional in content. "His work", says J L Kaul, "stands between two worlds of poetic imagination, one that has little hold on the present, and the other that borrows little from the past". Though he wrote at a time when poetic imagination was swept off its feet by the lure of a socialist dream, he always remained outside the ring of political enthusiasm. The kind of social awareness that one finds in connection with politics. His poems express the doubts and anguish that torment the modern mind, but he does not resolve these by the assertion of any dogmatic philosophy. He is the first poet who has departed from the tradition of stating mystical certitudes to present the eternal conflict between faith and reason and the problem of evil and suffering. Knowledge, which has given us material prosperity, has banished assurance and serenity from our hearts. Love, according to Zinda Kaul, is the only key to happiness, and God is the Hound of Heaven, forever waiting for man to turn to him :-

Having strayed, tottered and fallen,
How dare I face Him again ?
But you'll find it unavailing —
This lame excuse to fly Him.

For even if you turn,
He will pursue for ever;
This bond is from the dawn of life,
Not a passing childish fancy.

We find the finest expression of his belief in the supremacy of faith over reason in two of his poems, *Majbooriyaah* (Compulsion) and *Naatayaaree* (Unpreparedness).

Zinda Kaul introduced new stanzaic and metrical

patterns and is perhaps one of the very few Kashmiri poets who have used the ghazal form successfully. In most poems he uses what is called Hindu, i.e. Sanskritized Kashmiri. Though, as I have said, he doesn't belong to the poetical climate of the forties, any review of this period would be incomplete without reference to him, for he remains one of the foremost poets of the 20th century.

Nor can we ignore two other traditionalists in mystical poetry - Samad Mir and Abdul Ahad Zargar. Both of them show strong influence of Shamas Faqir. Both are also influenced to a considerable extent by Hindu spiritual disciplines.

Samad Mir of Nambal Haar (1892-1959) was a sawyer throughout his life and not at all formally educated but like his successor and younger contemporary, Ahad Zargar, he imbibed more from what we would call private tuition than ever is imparted in a classroom, senior or junior, and that too in a discipline unknown in formal schools. Khwaja Habib of Waagur, Wosta Khaaliq of Batamaloo and Ramzan Daar of Islamabad were his successive preceptors. And he was initiated into the Hindu spiritual discipline by Madho Ram. Thus he was thoroughly imbued with the mystical faith that all paths lead to the same goal. And that is his basic message, like that of all mystics.

His *vatsan* and ghazals reflect the depth of his spiritual knowledge. Communicating a mystical experience calls for new symbols and new metaphors, and an esoteric and abstruse communication does lead to obscurity, which one does notice in his poems. But his choice of words and symbols and metaphors is incomparable. He tells us that his language is figurative:

kathan myaanyan maane byon

The following lines are an example of his message and technique:

raahi bada nish kar traahi Bhagwaan
pwoný paaph traavith boz yaksaan
von Samad Miran shaastur hyoo
paru Om soo, paru Om soo

Samad Mir's *Aka Nandun*, a rendering of the Kashmiri legend about God demanding the supreme sacrifice — killing one's only son, as exemplified in the famous Abraham-Isaac story in the Bible — is perhaps the best of the renderings of this theme attempted by various other poets.

Certain faults of technique are seen in his poems which Naji attributes to the carelessness of the scribe. However, he is the second most important poet after Mahjoor, and just as Mahjoor begins a new age, Samad Mir ends the earlier one.

Abdul Ahad Zargar of Srinagar (b 1908) worked as a darner for a long time. He was a disciple of Samad Mir, and was like him seeking to understand the ultimate reality. He started writing at the age of 15 and eventually grew to be the last of the sufi poets in Kashmir.

He and Samad Mir were kindred souls in sufi belief, in temperament and in poetical technique. He also wrote *Aka Nandun*, which is an expression of his sufism, the firm mystical belief that all paths lead to the same goal, in which both he and Samad Mir were helped by a direct knowledge of Hindu mysticism. Both believed in casting aside worldly values considered normally respectable and inviolable. To convey this departure from conventional values, Zargar used imagery that would shock normal sensibility into an unusual awareness. The forceful imagery he used for this purpose bordered sometimes on the horror type as the following examples will illustrate:

- *Yas zaakh tasý suutý vaasil ban*
- *ganyi kar pananis aulaadas*

He used these images of incest and parricide only to

stress the need to radically change the accepted moral values. His language and imagery are symbolic, as he says in one poem:

Von Ahad Zargaran ghazal rangmaar

Zargar is technically flawless, and more romantic than many of his compeers. His use of *rang* and *shasrang* gives evidence of his consummate mastery of the poetic medium.

The year 1931, with the first memorable uprising in the century marks the dawn of political awakening in Kashmir. In 1938 the National Conference was founded, and the people had their first political dream. The new era dawns formally with Mahjoor's poem *Vwolo ha baagvaano* (Come, gardener) :-

Come, gardener
Create the glory of spring;
Make *guls* bloom and *bulbuls* sing
Create such haunts!
Rank nettles hamper the growth of your roses,
Weed them out,
For look, thousands of laughing hyacinths
Are crowding at the gate.

The 'thousands of laughing hyacinths' are the lower classes, the untapped reservoirs of virgin sensibilities and intact forces and, as Cazamian says, the literature of the future can live only if it continues taking its sap from the people. The kettle drums of the past are but poor music for our troubled times which demand an adequate reply to their accelerated grimace. Thus Mahjoor in the same poem :-

Bid good bye to your dulcet strains
to rouse this habitat of flowers,
create a storm;

Let thunder rumble,
let there be an earthquake !

Progressive Literature (1947-1953)

The great ferment that began in 1938 had its full flowering in 1948, and the impetus came from the invasion of the valley by Pakistan on the 22nd of October 1947. The fall of Baramulla to the raiders from across the border was perhaps as epoch making in Kashmir as the fall of Constantiople to the whole of Europe. It unleashed a whole fund of spiritual strength and opened new vistas that only yesterday would have seemed impossible. This year marks as complete a break with tradition as it is possible to find in the history of any literature. We must remember that three things happened at the same time : 1) the invasion ; 2) the dramatic collapse of feudalism ; 3) the formation of a people's government which very soon introduced the promised land reforms of a far-reaching importance. This generated an atmosphere of confidence and triumph and of new dreams and desires which were mostly Utopian. A new fervour gripped a new generation of poets who looked at new horizons and sincerely believed that they were the makers of a new reality.

It would be wrong to say that either Mahjoor or Azad remained the beacons or leading lights. The national poetry that was now born had new dimensions. It was the offspring of political adolescence and marked the beginning of the progressive movement in Kashmiri literature. A new environment threw up a new generation — a generation of city-bred young men, strongly influenced by Marxist thought, the Russian and Chinese revolutions and Indian nationalism. The literary influences that were dominant were progressive Indian and English writers and Russian poetry. These young writers found rhetoric more appealing than imagery. Persian models were no longer looked up to, for they didn't answer the needs of the period. The socialist movement

was the sole aim in life and their minds were so gripped by this aim that in whatever they wrote, whether, it was a story like Nadim's *Rai* (Blight) or a poem like Rahi's *Thahri Kati Jaagirdaaree* (How can feudalism survive?), artistic considerations like organic unity were always secondary. Art was for life and like social change, it became socialist propaganda. Unfortunately, as Noor Mohammad Bhat points out, "the war between affluence and poverty raged more fiercely in the poet's imagination than in reality". It is difficult to list the plethora of names that we find swimming into the poetical firmament, but I want to observe that though the bulk of their output may be wanting in refinement, it has abundant vigour and spontaneity. Its being essentially minor verse does not detract from its merit as pioneer work, and it is always the general level of its minor verse that determines the poetical climate of this period. The enriching of the content, the awakening of an intense national consciousness, the broadening of the horizons of the mind and the broad indication of the lines along which the literature of the future was to develop - these are some of the contributions of the writers of this period, and the future was the richer for their service.

In April, 1948, the Kashmir Cultural Front, a voluntary non-governmental organization of all the available artistic talent in Kashmir, published a small booklet entitled *Kashmir, Sing on*, an anthology of patriotic and marching songs, poems on exploitation, the raid, communalism and such other themes. It is dedicated to 'workers and peasants'. It may be compared to *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland* (1838), not because it has any mentionable artistic merit but because it is the testament of the will of a people, of a new faith. In October 1949, this organization, now re-christened the National Cultural Congress started publication of its monthly organ, *Kwong Posh*. Subsequently the *Bazme Adab*, which had been formed in 1940 with the aim of preserving old literary values, started publishing its journal, *Gulrez*, but

to *Kwong Posh* belongs the distinction of shaping the literary history of Kashmir from 1949 to 1956, the year it stopped publication. Mr Sadiq, in his presidential address to the National Cultural Congress in 1950, called it an independent people's organization which was a product of the national movement and had the same aim. "Literature", he said, "is a weapon to awaken the people. It is both a representative and an architect of the people's culture, an interpreter of their struggles and aspirations. It shall expose imperialist, capitalist and feudal designs on the people's freedom and give leadership and direction to their struggle and fight for world peace". (*Kwong Posh* - March 1950). It may be mentioned that the regular feature, *About Ourselves*, emphasised only this aim and never made any mention of literary problems and values. As far as the general level of the verse is considered, it must be pointed out that the repetition of the new themes, free use of the words 'exploiter', 'capitalist', etc. and of the new imagery of fire, storm, thunder, lightning, 'gunpowder in flower beds', mid-winter and spring does give one the impression of its being juvenile.

In this environment, Mahjoor found himself on a new wicket, and a very uneasy one at that. Though he was associated with the progressive group and chief editor of *Kwong Posh* till his death in 1952, he did not, in spite of his best efforts, share the ebullient enthusiasm of the younger generation of poets who hailed the revolution as if the millennium had come. Some of his poems like *Ala Baaný* (The plough) are definitely second-rate and lack in originality of thought, nor do they have the beauty and appeal of his love lyrics. From among his poems with a socio-political content, his satires on the new regime like *Aazaadi* (Freedom), *Poshinoolo* (O golden oriole), and *Sangarmaalan Pyav Paraagaash* (Daybreak over the hills) save him from lapsing into mediocrity. It is in these that he regains his individuality and acquires an incisive phrase which one could hardly have anticipated, considering his essentially sensuous, romantic

temperament and his love of the mellifluous language :

They searched her armpits seven times
To see if she was hiding rice;
In a basket covered with her shawl
The peasant's wife brought Freedom home. (*Freedom*)

Hawks have left your garden
And birds are all in song;
Now if you yourself turn a hawk,
How futile was this change. (*Poshinoolo*)

Politics was never his forte. To suggest that his exquisite lyric, *Greesý Koor* (The peasant girl) is an expression of class conflict is as ridiculous as calling Lal Ded the first progressive Kashmiri poet, which was actually done in those days of infantile Marxist literary criticism. Mahjoor's spirited *Vwolo ha baagawaano* (Come, gardener) is already dated and no longer inspires as it did once, for there is a yawning gulf between the Age of Mahjoor and our day. The latter half of this poem, which is devoted to the glorification of all the famous careerists and military conquerors of Old Kashmir, is a direct contradiction of the first half where the poet speaks of individual freedom and democracy. It would be right to say that Mahjoor had nothing specific to contribute after 1947, and that the Age of Mahjoor ended that year.

The leading poets after 1947 were Nadim, Firaq, Kamil,Arif, Nazki, Rahi, Almast, Premi, Khayyal, Muzzaffar Azim, Santosh and Reh. Most other poets whose poems were published in various journals have followed in the footsteps of Nadim and Rahi and make no claim to originality. The main poets among the traditionalists are Ariz, Nand Lal Ambardar, Rasa Javidani and Nawaz Ratanpuri.

With the flood tide of verse that was written during this period came experimentation with various forms and metres. The new forms that were born are free and blank

verse, the sonnet, the monologue, the opera, the quatrain and the *tukh*. Various Persian stanzaic patterns like the *mussamat* (of various length) were introduced. Surprisingly, more songs were written for *rov* and *vanavun*.

While these forms were introduced or revived, there are some that died. It is sad that *ladi shah*, the traditional form of satire, disappeared. But this loss has been compensated by the revival of the *rubai* (quatrain) which has infinitely more punch and epigrammatic terseness. The ghazal has been a definite casualty. This form was first used in Kashmiri poetry by Mahmood Gami, and later by Rasul Mir, Maqbool Shah Kraalawari, Prakash Bhat, Shamas Faqir and Ahmed Batawari, to mention only a few names. Writing a ghazal became a craze, because it was not only a popular form used by great Persian masters and Urdu poets like Ghalib and others, but also a convenient receptacle for wandering, disjointed thoughts which lacked tragically in any centrality. The main ghazal writers from 1920 to 1947 are Dilsoze, Majid Mir, and Asad Mir. But Zinda Kaul, Rasa Javidani, Mahjoor and Azad are perhaps the only poets who used the form successfully during this period. The stress on realism after 1947 led to the rejection of the loose form of ghazal and the change over to the *mussalsal ghazal*, i.e one having centrality of theme. Mere appeals to the beloved about a hundred assorted things found themselves replaced by social and political problems. The best ghazals today are those of Nadim, Kamil and Rahi, but this form is no longer considered the 'crown of poetry'.

In the past, paucity of material and absence of complexity of emotion or ideas made for a limited canvas. Modern poetry, because of an enlarged canvas, discards the conventionally artificial poetic language and adopts the rhythm of speech. A beautiful poem like Nadim's *Me Chham Aash Paguhch* (I dream of tomorrow) cannot be put on the *santoor* or *chhakree* in spite of its perfect rhyme and rhythm. It is a music of ideas, not of words. The best

poems show a perfect blending of matter and manner. In this category there are other poems like Kamil's *Yaarabaluk sahar* (Dawn on the river bank) and Firaq's *Bulbulas kun* (To the nightingale), though the latter suffers considerably by the inevitable comparison with Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

The most significant poet of the period is *Dina Nath Nadim*. In fact it wouldn't be wrong to call this period the Age of Nadim. When the Cultural Congress was formed and *Kwong Posh* started publication, the mantle of leadership fell almost automatically on Nadim, the spirit of the new movement of progressive writers. He joined the Communist Party in 1950, but his revulsion and revolt against the prevailing social order had begun when he was only a school boy. Childhood memories burn deep into a sensitive soul, and the political revolution and the progressive movement were only an answer to his soul's quest and not the cause of his education or conversion. The writers who shaped his personality were the English romantic poets, Mayakovsky, Gorky, Josh, Ehsan Danish and the moderns, particularly T.S. Eliot. His career as a poet is most intimately linked with the political developments in Kashmir from 1946 to the present day. To write about him is to write about the progressive movement in Kashmir. He sang of the dawn of the freedom movement in 1946 in his *Vwothi baaguch kukilee*, opposed the Macnaughton plan in *Dapaan ad karav az*, hailed the land to-the-tiller resolution in his *Asi Kaashiryav tul nov rut kadam* in 1951 and wrote his opera *Bombur ta Yamburzal* after Shiekh Abdullah's arrest in 1953. That same year brought the beginning of disillusion, reflected in his poem *Zindabaad me haz az chonuy sreh* (1954) as in Arif's *Soot chhuy tayaar habaa*, which was published the same year.

His exploitation of the resources of the Kashmiri language is remarkable, and with him the distinction between Hindu and Muslim Kashmiri may be said to have come to an end, for he proved that Kashmiri is as rich

and flexible a poetic medium as any and doesn't need to deck itself in borrowed robes. Using poetry as the vehicle of propaganda, he infused it with a vigour and masculinity it had never known before. He made use of rhyme, rhetoric and effective repetition to awaken the sensibilities of men to the dangers of war, imperialism and capitalism. In fact, during this period he hardly ever wrote a single poem without a direct political bias. His *Bu gyavana az* (I will not sing today) may be said to be the manifesto of the new movement :-

I will not sing
I will not sing today
Of roses and of nightingales
Of irises and hyacinths
Those drunken and ravishing
Dulcet and sleepy-eyed songs
No more such songs for me
I will not sing such songs today.

He introduced the rhythm of speech, as in the superbly constructed and restrained *Me chham aash paguhuch* (I dream of tomorrow), or of popular songs and hawkers' cries, as in *Dal haanzni hond vatsun* (The song of the boatwoman):

I've brought them fresh from the lake —
Come buy ! Come buy ! Come buy !
Small brinjals and round big gourds —
Come buy ! Come buy ! Come buy !

Fresh radish gleaming in the shade of the weeds,
Marsh turnip blushing like a belle—
O my boat is like the flowering dawn !
Come buy ! Come buy ! Come buy !

The most distinctive feature of Nadim's style is his impeccable use of words and his startlingly original

imagery, woven with the warp and weft of everyday Kashmiri life, thought and custom. Some of these images may appear far-fetched, but they convey the meaning most beautifully, as for example, in *Son vatan* (Our motherland) where he compares his motherland to a long absent uncle arriving from the village with a gift of apples. One also sometimes gets the feeling that the similes which almost choke his lines are not used out of a compulsive necessity to elucidate the meaning, and this is a weakness that one finds in many other younger poets whose thought and expression have been fertilized by Nadim.

Nadim began his experiments in free verse early, though he retained rhyme which with him hardly ever proved a handicap. *Suba Gaahee* (Morning), a beautiful description of daybreak, is in blank verse. Incidentally this poem, *Aadanuk Posh* (The first flower), *Tsyatas Chhuyi* (Do you remember?) and his very successful ghazals mark the beginning of his latest phase and departure from his total commitment to propagandist and tendentious poetry. *Naabad ta tyathavyan* (The bitter and the sweet), *Kaathý darvaaza pyatha gara taam* (From Kathi Darwaza to home), *Zalurý zaajý* (Spider webs), *Raatuký tre pahar* (The three stages of night), *Tsor vakh* (Four moments) and *Haarýsaat* (Incidents) belong to this period of maturity, inaugurating the use of the objective correlative in Kashmiri poetry.

Nadim has introduced the sonnet, both in the Petrarchan and Shakespearean forms, has written a few operas, the first being *Bombur ta yamburzal* (The bumble bee and the narcissus), which contains some delightful songs. He established the fact that propagandist literature need not necessarily be second rate. His politics are so vital and inseparable a part of his personality that they rather enrich than impoverish his poetry, though his efforts sometimes fall short of the fusion of the complex experience as poet and man into an artistic whole. One of his most forceful poems, *Aman apeeli pyath daskhat* (Signature on the peace appeal) could very well do without

the seventh and eighth stanzas, which mar its organic unity

The influence of Nadim is evident in the work of many poets, some of whom have borrowed not only his ideas but also his very images. ***Abdul Rahman Rahi's*** early work is seen clearly bearing Nadim's impression. He made his debut in the early 50's with the publication of a few propagandist poems, which were rich in promise, giving evidence of his skill in handling various stanzaic patterns and the ghazal. But at the same time one notices how uneasy the artist in him was grafting revolutionary exhortation on sensuous passages-an uneasiness which he fortunately overcame quite early with his discovery of the monologue, which he introduced into Kashmiri poetry. In *Gata ta gaash* (Darkness and light) the dispossessed *jagirdar* and the now-happy peasant speak alternately. His third volume of poems, *Navroz-e-saba,* which won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1961, reveals a careful artist, maturing both in thought and expression.

As in Nadim, his imagery is fresh and original and drawn from everyday proletarian life. His forte, however, is the evocation of an atmosphere through significant details and images — the symbolist technique. In *Zindagee* (Life) he evokes both the anguish and joy of existence through two pictures — the first of a mother watching her son being arrested at the dead of night, and the second of an expectant mother watching the joyous atmosphere of a school at closing time :-

> Four o'clock. The sun's face is flushed.
> In the school at *Maarbal* the peon,
> Swinging his arms lustily, strikes the bell.
> Life in the class room wakes up with a yawn,
> Like a flower shrub, shrunk and limp with the sun's heat,
> Suddenly finding the shade of a cloud.
> The teachers give the boys home tasks, and leave.
> Two class-mates decide to play under the chinars.

Like a couple of pigeons resolving to soar in the sky.
The school ground raises a merry din, seeing children at play.
Like birds flying down from their nests into the garden,
Like buds appearing in profusion on a tender bough,
Some running strapping satchels, some swinging slates,
Some like quicksilver, some bounding like the deer.
The peon swings open the outer gate
And the entire market bubbles with life.
The gram vendor's stock is gone in a flash,
The beansman hawks his wares.

Path agar yiyihe ti motas vaary (Then if death were to come) is the monologue of an old woman with an unquenchable love of life but no illusion about the hereafter :

O heart ! O foolish heart ! Ungovernable !
Knock at the door of my youth, call him back !
I would wash the dark robe of the night,
Send brocade for the sun to wear,
And plumes for his head,
Play many a lilting tune while drifting on the lake,
Water the bluebell in my yard.
Then if death were to come, what would he gain ?
And I don't care if they lock all the gates of paradise.

His poem *Azich kath* stands above the rest with its superb construction and imagery. Without recanting his political faith, he argues that if the fabric of our socialist dreams has to have a reality, we must start with the reorganization of our present existence. Otherwise it will only be vacant shuttles weaving the wind :

When the moon comes up with borrowed sheen
The impatient cry, 'Tis the midday sun'

Flowers in a vase delude the fool
To think the garden is in bloom.
The fowl flies to perch on a low mud wall
And thinks he has flown over lands and seas.
Promise of gold bracelets dulls one's ears
To the clanking of chains in one's own feet.

In his recent work Rahi has moved on to a contemplation of the fundamental problems of existence and of the role of religion, politics and philosophy throughout man's history. Poignancy of the memory of a dead love forms the theme of *Dahi vuhurý* (After ten years). *Reh ta raks* (The flame and the dance) has epigrammatic terseness and *Pai chu zulmaata vuzaan*(Out of darkness comes light) is an experiment in symbolism. One notices a certain growing preoccupation with the evanescence of life.

His *Takhleeq* (Creation) written after Nadim's *Naabad ta Tyathavyan* was a milestone in his evolution. The later poem *Son Gaam* (Our Village) inaugurates a new kind of satire, where a tongue-in-cheek statement or description is seen as the most powerful satiric mode. Here are a few lines from this poem :

I'll certainly study the *Quran*, but right now
I must set up my daughter in the matrimonial
market.

I'll no doubt feast the divines also if, God willing,
My *charas* venture proves successful!

... We've seen birth and death here, eaten and drunk
together, shared fun and frolic, tears and laughter.
It's here that I saw *Shiva* and *Shakti*
locked in embrace in the garden! It's here
you enjoy blue films behind closed doors.
... This is the land of *rishis*! Offerings naturally
are expected to pour in from every side.
When a dervish starts swirling rings of smoke,

bedlam is let loose here - the elderly men
assert breathlessly their lofty principles,
the youngsters swear by their unflinching loyalty
to their conscience. Alert brains, like a cat poised
to pounce on a rat! Ever ready with emphatic
statements,
like saying on oath that a rainbow is like a snake!

... We keep faith, and worship when the sun rises.
You become the leader, since you have an itching
palm!

In his recent poetry (post 1960) an intellectualization of style is noticeable, with symbols from Greek, Islamic and Indian mythology used. One also finds that, "what sets this poet apart from Kamil and his younger contemporaries is his present phase of constrained diction, untraditional imagery, underlying mythological allusions (often unfamiliar to the average Kashmiri) and a reflective, almost brooding tone, as for example in *Reh ta Raks*" (B.B Kachru : *Kashmiri Literature*). Kamil too became somewhat meditative and turned inwards, but he still sounds more convincing than the myth-ridden Rahi, whose poetry caters to the taste of the highbrow, but unlike Kamil's, his words do not touch the strings of one's heart (Ali Mohammad Lone : *Indian Poetry Today*.)

The new influences on Rahi are 1) native, eg, Lal Ded and Shamas Faqir, i.e, expressing thoughts and experiences, and not merely ideas, 2) western, mainly Hopkins (sprung rhythm) and Mallarme (symbolism) and 3) modern Persian writers like Nima Yushij (1895-1959) and Furugh-i-Furrukhazad (1934-1967). His use of free verse and blank verse has been remarkable. The new distinctive Rahi style can be seen in his poem *Takhleeq* (Creation), *Troparith Koothur* (Closed room) and *Baas* (Feeling).

Mir Ghulam Rasul Nazki (1909). With his *Namroodnaama*, he brought an entirely new mood to

Kashmiri verse. He divides the 200 quatrains of this book into three sections, the first expressing the passion of his heart, the second his deep inner quest and the third his love of God and the Prophet. The *rubai*, a 4-line independent little poem with a strict rhyme scheme has the squib or surprise in the fourth line. In addition, Nazki's *rubais* have a unit of mood and impression in each section, and suggest more than what they say. Some of his *rubais* are given below :

When that lovely woman wandered over
stream banks,
A fairy song tingled in the meadow's ears;
Tumbling in haste, the cascade washed his face
And, they say, spring stole a hasty glance.

Peach blossoms grow pale when they behold you;
Your frown troubles the hearts of buds;
Your radiance acts as salt on my old wounds—
The wounds your love alone can heal

The stars said to the moon, 'Behold our assembly!
What a pity you've chosen loneliness'.
She looked at them and sighed and said,
'O for some one to share my woes!'

Given below are lines from his ghazal written in 1988:

Naavi daryaavas andar log naar, haanzan mor paan
Lookh sombrin, naav bachaavun, amaa poz paana dod.
Khoon-i-naahak chhaa khatith rozaan, zaalim chhaa phabaan?
Raatý raatas shama dod, kaalai agar parvaana dod.

Mirza Ghulam Hassan Beg Arif is one who stands outside the ring, being by training and temperament a scientist who loves and is capable of detachment and

would rather belong to an intellectual minority, and assess and criticise if necessary, than follow the beaten track. He has been one of the foremost figures in Kashmiri literature for half a century. A man of rugged originality and sincerity, he has been associated with various literary and cultural activities ranging from the search for a script to the publication of literary journals. Though he founded the *Bazme Adab* as early as 1940 and held *mushairas* at his residence, his aim was not to found a school but give Kashmiri language and literature the status it had been denied. His literary influences were Iqbal, Ghalib, Chakbast, Hasrat Mohani, Josh, Faiz and Prem Chand. But even before meeting Iqbal, he never liked love poetry — in fact, he doesn't consider love as a subject fit for poetry at all. He has written on almost every other subject and reflected the different facets of social and political life in Kashmir as perhaps no other poet has done. It is only his mystical poems that fail to convince the reader about the intensity and depth of the spiritual experience.

Although he has been a prolific writer, he has not published much. His *Dusa* (The shawl), a poem on the exploitation of the shawl weavers, is quite forceful, and so is his *Baanahaj baal* (The Banihal Mountain), which describes the sufferings of coolies crossing over the mountain snows. *Zanaanan hond ehtejaaj* (The protest of women) is a plea for the emancipation of women. But Arif is a satirist par excellence, and his special medium like that of Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki whose *Namrood naamaa* and his latest *Aawaaz-i- dost* are quite well known, is the *rubai* (quatrain) which he uses with excellent effect as a medium of satire. He has throughout remained the watchdog of the revolution, as the following quatrains will show :-

The rich man called him scum
and fed him on his crumbs;
The political juggler called him king

and robbed him even of his rags;
The poor have for ages seen
The changing make-up of the knaves.

Political friendship is a paper boat,
Fit bed only for the foolish word.
If you would fare forward, beware
The wave of time and the wind of self-interest.

Satan arranged a jolly fete —
The crowds were huge, though the fees were high.
Intellect is now clean of the rust of honesty,
And religion is now an ace of trumps.

To Arif also belongs the distinction of being the first to end what was called *sarang nawazi* — i.e, the belief that a poem was essentially meant to be sung and set to music, with the result that words got chosen mainly and sometimes only for their melodic content, a vice which, as has been pointed out, Mahjoor is not free from.

Apart from his quatrains, his best and most popular poems are *Dusa, Guna hyath gur gom aabas tal, Mozrený, Magar kaaravaan son pakaan gav* and *Gati manz phata yaa rata nooraanas.* His latest poems are *Lola Vyatsar* (Rubaiyaat),*Pahalgam Vanuch Yaar* (The pine forest of Pahalgam) and *Maty'Aab* (Madness galore). This detached observer of life and men and satirist *par excellence* who never had any political or other alliance, has recently (1987) come out with his *Aalam Ashob* (The World in Tumult) which is quite forceful since it bristles not with mere sarcasm but also horror at the spectacle of Satanic forces invading the world and dominating in every sphere of life, at how this canker has been steadily permeating those very things which humanity has been looking forward to as a breakthrough to universal peace and finds them corroded. He prays for a new dawn when all 'isms' that cloak the goodness of man melt away and redeem the world.

Mohammad Amin Kamil's Mas malur (Flask of wine) was published in 1955. He has successfully experimented with different metres and forms, from the strident rhythm of *Aalyuk poshinool* (The oriole in his nest) to the nine-lined stanza of *Vakh chhu vuchh* (Now is the time). His poems show a true poetic sensibility, though some of them are marred when, as in *Gul-i-laala* (The tulip), the revolutionary suddenly wakes up and takes the platform to say a thing or two. His *Gaama masval* (The Village Iris) recalls Mahjoor's celebrated *Greesý koor* and is frankly derivative, but Kamil introduces a note of modern sensibility and feminism when comparing the peasant girl to a respectable middle class lady. Mahjoor makes the comparison thus :

What gulfs between you and high-born dames !
You are the soul of freedom and flowers
And the dames languish in shuttered prisons

And Kamil :

Others there are whose life's current
stopped flowing long ago —
Languishing veiled in mansions,
with life anaesthetised;
For these poor pallid moons,
youth comes as a misfortune,
A cloud that brings death.
They have ever lived gagged by conventional
demureness,
Lulled nightly to slumber by fairy tales of chastity,
Moth-eaten, mildewed, like an old account book,
Like a story long forgotten, like spent lightning.

Kamil tried his hand at unrhymed verse in *Dal toofaan* (A storm in the Dal lake), an allegory of the relentless struggle of life without the opium of a hereafter. His *Netha naný maane* (Naked thoughts), like Rahi's *Reh*

ta raks is epigrammatic, and among other things, touches upon the poet's eternal wrestle with an inadequate medium :

> The brocade of words is not to be had,
> And naked thoughts just waste away.

Terseness of expression is also evident in his other poems like *Doori prazlyav taarukhaa* (A distant star shone bright) and *Tsu ta bu* (You and I).

Kamil states in the very first collection of his poems, *Mas malar :*

> *Guftaar judaa myon, afsaana judaa myon*
> *andaazi bayaan myon alag, shaana judaa myon*
> *manzil alag, maqsad alag, saamaana judaa myon,*

announcing that his speech, his tale, his style, his goal and his resources were different from those of other writers. This he reiterated in his preface to his second collection, *Lava ta prava* (Dewdrops and sunbeams) : 'In their theme and craftsmanship, these poems are entirely new'. His two later collections— *Beyi Sui Paan* and *Padis Pod Tshaayi* are also commendable. Apart from using new symbols and metaphors, he blended Hindu mythology into his poetry, e.g. *Vaapasi* (Return) and *Yeli tamý dop* (When he said), because, he says, 'these words and symbols from the Hindu *Puranas*, religion and culture have blended with my life and have become part of us'. Kamil is at present the numero uno among the ghazal writers of Kashmir. He has infused his ghazal with realism and a modern sensibility, de-Persianized its tone and nativized its diction and symbolism. Kamil's ghazals, says J.L. Kaul, are uniformly satisfying. His ability to handle the word horde in ghazals, with each one employed for a specific effect is superb. And the fact he draws all of them from the language of everyday speech is laudable. A touch

of delightful satire thrown in is Kamil's way of looking at reality. He gave the ghazal an elegance and made it an effective vehicle of satire.

The accent on realistic art or people's poetry is best seen in the poems of ***Dina Nath Wali Almast.*** His *Baala Yapaari* (This side of the mountain) appeared in the same year as Kamil's *Mas malur.* Essentially a painter, Almast makes no claim to breaking new ground in form and metre. His *ghazals*, like those of Rasa Javidani, have only a certain degree of virtuosity. The title poem, *Baala Yapaari* and its sequel, *Baala apaari* (Across the mountain) describe the plight of a Kashmiri wage labourer crippled by disease and reduced to begging in the hot plains while his impecunious wife and children are waiting for his return home. There are other poems - on themes like the Hindu widow (*Vyadvaah*), women gathering cowdung and water weeds (*Kharý haanzaný*), a girl abducted by the raiders and sold into a Pakistani brothel and so on. Many other poets also have written on the proletarian Eve. Fazil had written earlier two excellent lyrics, *Kraala Koor* (The potter's daughter) and *Pahalý Koor* (The shephered girl), in the manner of Mahjoor's *Greesý Koor.* Bahaar wrote *Gaarý haanzaný* (The water-nut seller) and Nadim *Dal Haanzni hond vatsun* and Premi, *Tuyi* (The yarn). These are all, except for Fazil's two poems, reminiscent of Hood's The *song of the Shirt.* Indeed it became a fashion to write on some working class woman or other. It would seem that each daughter of the soil can now boast of more that one poem composed on her.

Ghulam Nabi Firaq was one of the founder members of the National Cultural Congress. In his earlier days he believed in communism and was in the vanguard of the progressive movement. His poetry shows a deep influence of the Urdu progressive and English romantic poets. He has enriched Kashmiri poetry with his numerous translations of English poems. In 1956, with the disintegration of the progressive movement, he joined the Kashmir Cultural Centre. Ever since he has been mainly

writing poems describing the beauty of nature.

Ghulam Mohammad Fazil has written some delightful poems like *Kraala Koor, Pahalý Koor and Chana ros pyaala gom khaaliye.* They are essentially songs and do not have much depth. His description of nature has only a photographic interest. There is no aim at interpretation, nor can we say that he has essentially an ideology, a faith or even a point of view. His *Tasveeri Gam,* short elegies on the martyrdom at Karbala fail to bring out the significance of the sacrifice, which needed a longer and slow-moving rhythm.

Noor Mohammad Roshan experimented with *tukh,* a pithy 4-lined verse form, structurally close to *rubai.* But it is only in his poem *Bahaar* (Spring) that he may be said to be really calling on the Muse. This poem, describing the advent of spring in Kashmir, vibrates with the joy of life :

When the spring breeze crossed over the mountain,
The clouds packed up their dull grey shawls,
The sky turned blue as a sapphire;
The sun laughed from behind the distant peaks ;
The mountain snow perspired
Like a bashful nymph in confusion,

Giving birth under her mantle to infant rills.
Seeing this, streams leapt wildly forth,
Bounding over rocks like churned, foaming milk,
And kissing on the forehead the waterfalls,
They cried, 'Our darling spring has come'

Roshan's present medium is the *tukh,* a form of the *rubaai,* though he has, sadly enough, not written any thing since 1960.

One must also mention here the poets who belonged thematically and stylistically to this pre-renaissance period.

Lassa Khan Fida of Islamabad (1893-1965) a disciple

of Mohammad Siraaj and Gulam Nabi Bhat of Lahore, wrote two *masnavis, Gulzaar-i-Haqeekat and Gul-i-Bakavali.* The latter is considered better despite its technical flaws. He also wrote some *vatsan* and ghazals. One remarkable thing about his poems is the absence of heavy Persianized vocabulary which had become conventional and almost obligatory, so the poets felt. His main aim, however, was to be a spiritual guide and not a mere poet.

Tanha Ansari of Delina (1914-1949), wrote many ghazals and *nazams*. Credit goes to him for introducing a new style in *marsiyas* (elegies) which were formerly restricted to lamentation at the tragic fate of Hasan and Hussain at Karbala. His *marsiyas* have a poetic richness too. His collected works, *Furaat* comprises poems on various themes. He raises his voice against tyranny, dearness, poverty and idiots in positions of power and prestige:

anigot toophaan nari phut haanz
dar chhum naav zaanh lagi tyaa baal

kan thaký bozaan Laal Majnoon
vani naa kaanh Naagraay Heemaal

Mohammad Khaar of Shaahgund on the Wular bank (1894-1967) follows in the wake of Zargar as a sufi poet.

Rasa Javidani (real name: Abdul Qadoos) of Bhadarwah (1907-1979) started writing in Urdu before switching over to his mother tongue. His collected works, *Nerang Ghazal*, show how he has been powerfully influenced by Rasul Mir and Mahjoor, but he combines the traditional vein with new experiments in metre and imagery, and is conscious of seeing things in a new light that has come with the changing times:

halý tse laayith me kaan saaree
magar lagith gai timai nishaanan

Ghulam Rasool Kaamgaar (b 1888) was an employee in the Revenue Department. He translated Iqbal's *Israar-i-khudee*.

Abdul Ghani Masroor of Kulgam (b 1926) has written *ghazals* and *nazams*, which are in the traditional style, though he desires to create a mental awakening in the people. Most of his poems are unpublished.

Mohi-ud-din Nawaz of Pulwama (b 1926) attained great popularity with his romantic poems, and tried later to weave a spiritual vein into them too. His published work is entitled *Mizraab*.

Bahaar Shah of Lakharpur (1914-1974) wrote a *masnavi, Haatim Tai*. He also wrote a description of the 1931 uprising in *Ahwaal-i-Kashmir*. His forte, however, is humour and satire.

Abdul Ghani Thukur of Kulgam (b 1920) has maintained the *masnavi* tradition, producing five of them— *Bulbul hazaar daastaan, Wazramaal, Khaalid bin Valeed, Kissa Hazrat Ayoob Saabir* and *Saar-i-Jannat (Kissa Hazrat Idrees)*. All of them are in heavily Persianized Kashmiri and do not have a mentionable poetic merit.

Fakir Abdul Karim of Srinagar (b 1925) was influenced by Ahad Zargar and wrote soofiyaana verse. At many places one finds the echoes of Shamas Faqir. One can say that he too could be bracketed with Zargar as the last voice in this genre. But his real field is love poetry. His language is not Persianized. His collected works, *Ganj Vahdat* is a medley of ghazal, *rov* and *na'at* and has a foreword by Shamas-ud-din.

Namat Ullah Pare of Safapur (1883-1963), generally called Nema Sahib, wrote a *masnavi, Gul-i-Bakaavali*, as done earlier by Lassa Khan Fida and Hakim Abdul Sheikh. His is the longest of the three, and was published by the J&K Cultural Academy.

Laala Lakhýman the people's poet, was a village postman. In language which is far from sophisticated he has painted delightful vignettes of rural life caught between conservatism and change. The comic situations

produced by the impact of modern civilization on amused and mildly recalcitrant villagers form the subject of his poems. His laughter does not always have a satiric ring; he sees it as the spice of life, a factor which has made his *Laala Lakhýman shakdaare draav* (Laala Lakhyman is on his rounds) and other poems very popular.

To sum up, the contribution of the poets during this period has been the enriching of the content of Kashmiri poetry with the inclusion of an intense national consciousness and social awareness, the introduction of a wide variety of forms and metres as a consequence of the indefatigable search for a new medium and the simplification of the language of poetry, which is now more akin to the spoken language.

Years of Disillusion (1953-1960)

With the mid-fifties came what may rightly be called the decade of despair as far as Kashmiri poetry was concerned. Elsewhere too, sombre gloom and frustration followed the ebullient enthusiasm of the late forties and the early fifties (1946-1953). The dominant note was disillusion, as can be seen in Kaifi Azmi's *Aawaaraa Sajde* and Sardar Jaffri's *Pathar kee deewaar.* The dream of a world commune had beguiled a whole generation. And now the progressive movement, the fancied road to this Utopia, was dead, not only in Kashmir but all over India. It would be wrong and perhaps naive to attribute every thing to the posthumous unmasking of Stalin, the high priest of world communism. The erstwhile patrons of the progressive movement were now government bosses and their social and ethical values had undergone a sea change, with the result that they viewed the progressive movement now as a danger to their present power, prestige and stability. In fact the very word 'progressive' was in bad odour with the authorities. Any proposal made to diversify and enlarge cultural programmes was enough evidence to brand the dedicated workers of this wonderful

organization as the running dogs of communism. The meagre aid to enable them to launch various programmes in the villages was stopped. About the same time, with the birth of Radio Kashmir the best talents like Mohan Lal Aima, Pran Kishore, Pushkar Bhan and a host of others found themselves whisked away. Though there is no denying the fact that these talented and dedicated men, who had a sense of total involvement in any activity they undertook, made Radio Kashmir one of the very best of radio stations, it meant a great setback to the progressive movement. The decimated strength now included Som Nath Zutshi, Noor Mohammad Roshan, Abdul Ghani Namtahali, Dina Nath Nadim and a few others. With the disappearance of the mirage of a world commune came also the disappearance of the much-advertised 'exploited class'. The poet found himself isolated, and he realized painfully that he was not an integral part of society, let alone its architect as he had supposed himself to be. For the *nouveaux riches*, Urdu, English or Hindi became the status symbol once again, and Kashmiri remained only with a few eccentrics who kept Radio Kashmir and J&K Cultural Academy alive and were reciprocally kept alive by these organizations.

There was an almost total disarray in the ranks of the writers. It was whispered that this disarray and disintegration was an engineered exercise to break the back of what was considered to be a social menace. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq , the last Prime Minister and the first Chief Minister and the founder of the Cultural Front and patron of the progressive movement had, along with D.P. Dhar, broken off with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and set up the Democratic National Conference, but was back in power in his old organization after three years. Most progressives, including Nadim, were with him, while some, to gain social respectability once again, recanted their faith in 1955. Nadim, however, was never apologetic. He never reviled the progressive movement even when he was Assistant Director Social

Education. And the only writer who stood fast by his side was Noor Mohammad Roshan, one of the first to join the Cultural Front, who translated Munshi Prem Chand's *Godan* into Kashmiri and stopped writing poetry altogether after his disillusionment. He is amazed at how the revolution was betrayed by those who wore the mask of socialism then and can wear the mask of grief and other masks whenever necessary, as stated in his poem, the "Martyr's Mother" :

While there was many a mile to go
And the road still wet with the martyrs' blood
They forgot the distant goal
And turned their back on the caravan;
With painted grief they've come today,
Offering flowers ...

A strain of sardonic humour crept into Nadim's poetry too during this period (1953-60). As the grape vine says, the very person who people believed would steer the ship of state and be its firm anchor started displaying an anti-people attitude in 1952, when he was firmly in power. This dramatic change in the portrait of the leader was incredible. The dismay and the amazement of the people could aptly be described in these lines from Browning's *The Lost leader* :

We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen.

And with this came the crumbling of other idols too, one after another, and faith itself stood wobbling, not knowing where to perch. Betrayal of faith occurs as the recurrent thought every now and then, woven deftly into

the fabric of a poem. The first expression of this agony came in Nadim's *Trivanzaah* (Fifty three) which has as its theme political double-dealing, posturing and loot, how the selfish deceive the people and how helpless people really are. The stylistic innovation here is the dramatic monologue, which was very much liked by the younger generation. This also is the first poem making sound meaningful. The rhythm of the normal way of the boatman's counting while weighing rice is the rhythm of the poem itself.

In *Kaagaz vaalý sunz hakh* (Paper Vendee's Cry) Nadim makes use of another extremely familiar cry one hears at any time of the day in every lane in the city — the paper vendee's. This is retained in the poem without any change in rhythm, texture or tone. The poet only adds that waste paper is not the only disposable commodity. He suggests that many things are heavy luggage in a world with a fast changing tempo and kaleidoscopic values. Conscience, identity, family attachment and dreams are luxuries one cannot afford. They are definitely disposable stuff. And racking your brains about how X got his wealth, Y has been selling under weight and why Z sold his modesty is futile and stupid, as also your desperate efforts to set things right. Better let them remain upside down and sell your dreams while the going is good:

> Pawn your tongue, and sell your speech
> Sell all that's lying waste.

He tilts his lance at those who betrayed their cherished ideals for a mess of pottage, and obliquely refers to talent being bought. There is a story — which one cannot vouch for — that Bakshi Abdul Rashid, President of the newly-formed *Kaashur Markaz* indulged in this activity, and the progressive movement did not disintegrate after 1956 merely because it was a spent force but also because of the growth of this rival organization. There is a biting satire in *Huti nazran dolaan*

dyaar matyo (See money bags dangling before your eyes), which it is said, refers to a poet entering the Bakshi fold.

Zinda baad me haz az chonuy sreh (You are the one I adore) is a satire on flattery and sycophancy which were becoming a daily routine, while worthwhile attachments were being given short shrift. This was written soon after disillusion had firmly dawned (1954). Later, in 1957 he recited his poem *Khwaja Mohammad* in an open *mushaira* at Jammu :

Khwaja Mohammad is now a nawab
But 'Moma' remains the same 'Moma' —
Can you solve this riddle;
Pour me a cup of wine.

It would be wrong to dismiss the fifties only as a decade of disillusion, that is to assume that progressive literature was the only creative writing indulged in from 1947 to 1953 and its cessation the commencement of literary silence. As has already been pointed out, progressive writing was the most significant departure from the normal literary activity, which does not mean that all writers had subscribed to the theory that art should be a vehicle of social reform. For some it was a faith, the most important of these writers being Nadim. For others there was no commitment, and as has been pointed out, many poets like Zinda Kaul, Samad Mir, Ahad Zargar, Ghulam Rasul Nazki, Ghulam Nabi Khayaal, Vasudev Reh, Ghulam Ahmad Fazil, Dina Nath Wali Almast, Tanha Ansari and others continued writing without being influenced by the progressive movement. And some who were in the forefront of this movement like Nadim, Kamil, Rahi, Ghulam Nabi Firaq, Santosh, Zutshi and others gave evidence that they were fully conscious of a higher and non-committal function of literature. In fact their most outstanding contribution to Kashmiri literature came after they had cast off the progressive slough. But despite all this, this movement

was a significant movement that took a whole generation of writers by storm.

The New Divergencies

After 1955, when revolutionary ardour was more or less spent and disillusion had seeped in, the major poets started seeking new avenues to articulate a complex sensibility and experimenting with expressionism. The first shot was again fired by Nadim with his *Naabad ta Tyathavyan* (The bitter and the sweet) in 1960. One finds the poet's engaged now in a search for a new idiom and a reaction against their own earlier facile technique. But because of the discovery of a new Helicon, the poetry of this period of bold experimentation is by and large young and fresh and does not suffer from any of the diseases of opulent old age.

With the deepening twilight of frustration, the imagery of spring disappeared and night occurred in poem after poem both as theme and symbol. Many poets freed themselves from the shackles of rhyme and metre and end-stopped lines, though not always out of a compulsive flow of ideas. It would be correct to say that modern poetry really begins with 1960, and that the four years from 1956 to 1960 may be considered the transitional phase. The leaders of the new era were indisputably Nadim, Rahi and Kamil. Though one cannot bracket them together as far as theme, form and style are concerned, they introduced new themes and experiences, new imagery and a modernity of outlook. Earlier, in the fifties, the mob for whom all poetry was written, needed 'emphatic warrant' and thus rhetoric and repetition. Now the poet started withdrawing more and more into the isolation of the spirit, with the result that private images and the concomitant corollary of occasional obscurity made their appearance. At the same time concreteness, precision, economy of style, attention to verbal texture and juxtaposition of ideas introduced a meaningful and

creative use of language. Art, in other words, had come into its own.

While after 1947 many forms were revived or introduced, the ghazal was a definite casualty as a medium, because of its inability to handle new ideas and the popular revolutionary upsurge. Mahjoor in his last phase, however, being 'above the clouds, outside the ring', retained it with very good results as the vehicle of satire. When in 1954 disillusion gradually dawned also on those who were less detached and more committed to the progressive movement, the ghazal in its *mussalsal* form once again revived. The idols of revolution were tottering on their pedestals, so direct expression was of no avail. On the other hand, the ghazal offered excellent opportunities of oblique reference, such as in Rahi's :

> *Badlaavanuy hyot rahbarav eemaan, vanay kyaah*
> (Our guides themselves are changing faith—what shall I say?)

The first poet to excel in the field of ghazal writing was Mohammad Amin Kamil. He gave it elegance and made it an effective vehicle of satire — difficult art which has been practised successfully by Kamil, Rahi and Nadim so far. While Rahi, Kamil and others build on the traditional structure, and introduce the modern note in the verbal texture, Nadim goes a step further by introducing a new style.

The last five decades have seen unprecedented cultural and literary activity in Kashmir. In poetry one saw several aesthetically satisfying and formally innovative works. In other genres too a beginning was made. For the first time a literary milieu was created for Kashmiri. There has been a hindrance, as has been pointed out, in the field of the novel, mainly because the readers don't find it standard or acceptable yet, and thus there is no appreciable market to encourage publishers. Discursive prose is fortunately moving ahead with

appropriate styles, structures and interaction for special functions, as you find in Kamil, Nirdosh and Lone's fiction, who use generally accepted vocabulary, which you don't find in the Radio Kashmir news commentary where prose has to be deliberate and argumentative. As far as choice of sources of vocabulary is concerned, the present poetic styles show a growing tendency towards neutralization (i.e. de-Sanskritization and de-Persianization of what are called Hindu and Muslim Kashmiri respectively), as you find in Nadim's later poems, Kamil's ghazals and Rahi's *Baas*. With the emancipation from a dominant literary paradigm, poets are looking back to Lal Ded, Habba Khaatoon, Rasul Mir, the philosophical traditions of Shaivism and the rishi and sufi schools. *Vaakh* has come back. And what is refreshing is that there are new themes and techniques. And prose is still young.

The period that followed the years of disillusion in 1960 saw Kashmiri writers, particularly poets, gradually exploring new horizons. Numerous poetic trends made their appearance, but one cannot find any dominant influence in operation. The picture is vastly different from what it was upto 1960. Poets do give you the impression that they are guided by their own lights. For example, Santosh immersed himself in Kashmiri Shavism and was experimenting with *Bahr-i-taveel* in Kashmiri, Saqi was profoundly influenced by Nadim's style of love lyrics and nature poems but maintained a studied distance from his progressive creed. Most poets were uninfluenced by any 'isms', completely outside the sway of their contemporaries. "It is difficult to say what is representative of Kashmiri poetry, other than individualism, an introspection and reaching for inspiration from non traditional sources. That generalizations are difficult to make, is perhaps a sign of maturity, marking contemporary poetry as different" (Kachru : *Kashmiri Literature*).

Abdul Sataar Ranjoor (1917) is the only one from among the progressive group who kept his political faith

and has been maintaining a revolutionary strain in his poetry consistently. His first publication was *Baang-e-Inqilaab*, and his latest is *Poshi Mashaaly* (1986).

Shambu Nath Bhat Haleem (1921) whose compositions in Kashmiri, Hindi and Urdu have been published in *Kwong Posh*, *Sheeraaza*, *Gulrez*, *Pamposh*, *Beesvee Sadee* and *Khidmat* is a well-established poet, who started writing in Kashmiri in 1949 without discontinuing writing in Hindi and Urdu. He is essentially a lyricist.

Arjan Dev Majboor (1922) began as a 'progressive', strongly influenced by Nadim, and in his *Su boozin* did make an attempt to introduce 'progressive sentiments' in vogue at that time. But he actually did not belong to the progressive creed, like most camp followers of this movement. He remained outside the ring of political commitment though his firm belief is that literature cannot be divorced from society. He is the poet of the workers and the peasants, though not in the sloganeering manner. The sighs of the poor and the beauty of nature are blended in his poems, which have been translated into other languages. He is essentially a *nazam* writer, and most certainly a nature poet. He has to his credit five anthologies of his poems and a Kashmiri translation of Kalidasa's *Meghadootam* and won the J&K Academy award for his *Padý Samayiký* (The march of time) in 1993. And deservedly so, as it establishes Majboor as a poet of nature, describing the beauty of Kashmir in various seasons and deftly weaving into it the cultural and legendary past of the 'paradise on earth'. In his last collection, *Tyol*, the main poem bearing this title is a long poem on human issues and there are also other poems on Kashmir. Earlier, in 1988 he attempted the epic, *Sangar ta Sangarmaal*, when Prakash Premi wrote a remarkable Dogri epic, *Bhedi Dartee Dee*, and urged Majboor to write one in Kashmiri. That was the beginning of his passion for long poems. Many of the lines of this poem are there in his *Padý Samayiký* with minor modifications. In 1983

he published *Dashahaar*, a selection from his poems written during the preceding ten years, and his *Dazavuný Kosam* in 1987. Recently a selection of his poems translated into English verse by Arvind Gigoo appeared under the title *Waves*, and was very well received. Examples of his poetry :

shongaan yeli raath baalan shaand thaavith
vwothaan myaanyan khayaalan thaand lot lot
kalam myonuy gatshith aazaad hyoo zan
bahaaran naala dee dee sheri laagan.

jigar tsataan chhe chaaný paarudý nazar yikhnaa
yi raath mangaan chhe shihilý sahar yikhnaa.

Hamidi Kashmiri (1923) made a mark as critic, poet, short story writer, dramatist and novelist in Urdu, occasionally composing an odd ghazal or *nazam* in Kashmiri. He has shown that long poems are not out of date; they are possible even now; his own poem, *Talpaataal* is an example.

Fariq Budgami (1924) published three collections: *Yaad-e-maazee*, *Intezaar* and *Kalaam-i-Farooq*.

Makhan Lal Mahaw (1926) was on the editorial board of *Hamdard* as well as *Khidmat*. His speciality is a satiric tone and he trains his guns on customs, manners, even God. His publication *Mitsurý kandý golaab* is quite popular. An example of his poetry :

Yodvai zyavakh afsoos khyakh
Me hyoo jadaalaah akh banakh
beyi myaaný paathý zaalas phasakh
gulý taali pyath thaavith vadakh
yath aalamas vada vada karakh
yuth no zyavakh, yuth no zyavakh

Vasudev Reh (1926-2001), in his expressive yet simple style conveys his experience and mild warnings as in *Shab*

Gard (The Night Watchman) :

> O friends, save the toy houses you as children built in play.
> Hold fast to the present time ; to let it slip is folly.
> Don't rest when the pipe calls the snake; its not a foreign sound.
> So that the flame doesn't burn the bride's dreams, beware!

His unadorned style conveying the simple truth is seen again in *Yath chhu saalaab yivavun* (A flood is coming) :

> I know the world, for I have seen
> The tyranny of want, grace in equality,
> The pride of wealth, love's enduring bond,
> Mere expense in wine, virtue in water.

You do find the inevitable moth and bulbul, but this time the metaphors and imagery are different and the context differs from what we have seen in earlier periods:

> See the moth clings to the flame,
> the bulbul finds bliss offering his life to the blossoms;
> This is how birds attain their goal —
> Lofty the aim and the path self-immolation.

Ghulam Rasool Santosh (1929-1997) is typical of the new trend that emerged with the end of the progressivism of the mid-century. The new writers drifted from the progressive faith and moorings and each sought a new anchorage. Santosh had a very close affiliation with the Progressive Writers' Association. In fact he was very greatly influenced by Nadim, as is seen in his modelling *Vyas myaaný Nooraah* closely on Nadim's *Lakhchi chhu lakhchun* and his *Raath* on Nadim's *Raatuký tre pahar.* Santosh was a distinguished painter, apart from a well-

known poet and critic and literary journalist. He wrote sonnets, ghazals and blank verse. His diction is carefully chosen and his images and metaphors suggestive. He uses language like a painter, economically and effectively. Here are a few lines from his *Raath*:-

Darkness cold as frozen snow.
Hiding a swarm of secret sins
A curse on creation's face
Puts out the lamps of heaven.
Cold is the lamp
Its dull eyes drowsed
With hours of vigil.

After "the earlier influences, Santosh came finally to the native philosophical doctrine of Kashmir Shaivism which provides the underlying basis for his recent poems and the theme of his paintings. The blend of cultures and religions, long a part of Kashmiri poetry, seems to acquire a new form in this poet. His *Bahr-i-taveel*, is an original experiment in Kashmiri. Formally, he is following the Persian tradition of composing a long poem with structural flexibility". (B.B. Kachru : *Kashmiri Literature*)

The first stanza of his poem *Shaktee vyetsaar* given below enunciates the marked influence of the Shaivite faith on the poet :

Aashabda gati manz prakaash shaktee
vimarsha netran chhe gaash shaktee
me naad gandmuts chhe raash shaktee
me aada antuch chhe aash shaktee.

Sataar Ahmed Shahid (1930) is a prolific prose writer, but does sometimes write ghazals too. Mushtaaq Kashmiri (1930) is a religious (*Islami*) poet, heart and soul, and his language is heavily Persianized. Rashid Nazki (1931) too employs the same kind of diction, being greatly influenced by Persian poetry and Iqbal. Ghulam

Nabi Nazir (1931) published his *Vaarýdaath*, and later in 1990 his *Achhar Tsaangý*. He also has written the new style ghazals. His language is simple and there is no obscurity in his poems.

Nishat Ansari (1930-2000), essentially a ghazal poet, writes also *marsiyas* and religious poems. His first collection, *Gulnaar* ,won the J & K Academy award. His last collection, *Naaravan*, was published in 1992.

Naji Munawar (1933) is actually Ghulam Nabi, son of Khwaja Munawar Lone. The name he bears is a combination of his father's name with his pen-name, Naji. His profession is teaching, and he is specially interested in writing and publishing material that would be both useful and attractive to children. In collaboration with Autar Krishen Rahbar he produced a book of stories entitled *Mwokhta lar* for children.

His first poems, which were published in *Kwong Posh*, combined a fare of revolutionary slogans and a portrayal of simple village life. His *nazams* — *Gongal*, *Saaree samahan*, *Roop ta rung*, and *Lwokachaaruk akh doh* give one the impression that they are perhaps all written for children. You don't find him anywhere wearing the mantle of a social reformer or adopting a didactic stance. All his poems are woven round the feelings and experiences of the common man. And one thing is evident, that he doesn't seem to be fond of polishing and chiselling the language of the poem, as his first collection, *Naagaraad* will show. There is a mild satiric tone - not directed at a specific thing, call it just sarcasm or taunt. He started writing what he called "anti-ghazals". Some of the poems in this category are in his *Naagaraad*.

Prem Nath Premi (1933) has been writing progressive verse ever since 1947.

Ghulam Nabi Gauhar (1934) who made a mark as a novelist, does write poetry also. He remains distant from slogans, though he does stimulate the mind.

Muzaffar Azim (1934) who works as Deputy Director Sericulture in Kashmir got the J&K. Cultural Academy

award for his publication *Zolaana* (Fetters) in 1965. He followed this with another collection *Mani kaaman* (Heart's desire). His satire, rustic at places, has genuine humour and the ingenuity of his expression makes his poems different from those of his contemporaries. His first few poems appeared in *Kwong Posh*, and afterwards in other journals and papers. Ghazal seems to be his forte. His poetry represents some of the main trends of the day, the mental unrest and anchorless life of the time. His *Safed Nazma*, eight small poems appeared in 1987. Example:

Agar raatas taarakh vavakh
Subhas lonakh aaftaab

He has also written critical essays and operas.

The opening stanza of *Mani kaaman*, which is also the refrain, sums up the theme of the poem :

Saaraan saaraan draayosai mati
Hai hai ad vati maa gatshi shaam
Osukh vati vati athi aaham kati
Hai hai ad vati maa gatshi shaam

His play *Havas ta Haasil* was staged at the All-India Agricultural Fair at New Delhi in 1959. He represented Kashmir at the All India National *Mushaira* in 1961. The basic theme of all his poems is search for beauty in everything. In fact beauty is Muzaffar Azim's passion.

Qazi Ghulam Mohammad (1935) made a mark as a satirist in Urdu, but this strain is strangely absent in his Kashmiri poems. He employs ordinary, familiar objects like thatched roof, earrings, cap, *surnai* etc, as effective images, which is quite remarkable.

Mishal Sultanpuri (1936 - real name Mohammad Ramzan) is essentially a ghazal poet whose effort is to capture in his poems the transient moments of the superb beauty of nature. They are thus, as can be seen in his collection, *Hee Van*, resonant with the music of birds and

streams and trees. He is aware of the modern trends and cannot be labelled as a conventional poet, as Rashid Nazki calls him. He has to his credit, apart from his ghazals, *rubai* and *tukh* and *nazams* too. He does use free verse, but metre plays a vital role, as in *Paatý Kyom* (silkworn), *Judaayee* (separation) and other poems.

Sana Ullah Shahid of Delina, an ardent disciple of Nishat Ansari writes mainly *ghazals*, and has brought out his collection, *Sarood*. Ghulam Mohammad Gamgeen writes ghazals, *nazam* and *tukh*. He has written an elegy on 'Nehru, the architect of India'.

Tanha Nizami of Kreeri, Baramulla is one of the new talents baptised in Kamil's journal, *Neb*. His first publication of ghazals and *nazams*, *Anaharý Khaab* (Virgin Dreams) showed promise. This was followed by better choice of words and a new perspective later. He writes mainly *nazams*.

Ghulam Nabi Khayal (1938) is one of the most prominent literary personalities of the post-progressive period in Kashmir. He shone in many fields — as poet, essaysist, literary journalist, critic, translator. After his stint as an author in Urdu till 1954, he switched over to Kashmiri and joined Radio Kashmir as news reader. He also worked as sub-editor of *Kwong Posh*. In 1958 he was arrested as a suspect in the Hazratbal case and jailed for a year, during which he wrote his *Zanjeeri hond saaz* (Music of the fetters) and translated *Rubaiyaat* of Omar Khayaam. His *Pragaash* (ghazals and other poems 1954-57) was an earlier compositoin. J.L. Kaul calls it "juvenilia" and says *Zanjeeri hond Saaz* lacks distinction. As a research assistant in the Cultural Academy, he prepared Lakshmanjoo Bulbul's *Saamnaama* and the *masnavi* of Sheikh Yaakoob Sarfee for publication. He edited the weekly *Mahaaz* and later started his own weekly paper, *Vatan*. One of his best-received books was *Gaashirý Munaar* (Luminaries), short biographical sketches of outstanding world poets, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1975. As a poet he was influenced by

Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and does not like obscurity in modern poetry. He is essentially a poet of *nazams*, like *Yali Khwodaa mood, Reshmaan, Bani adam* etc. An example of his poetry :

Maarý mond jismaa tshataan joshaa
pato laakaný na kenh
aasmaanaa nyool sarposha
pato laakaný na kenh
zindagee hond raaz akh shaah
hyor khasaan yaa bwon vasaan
ath shaahas asi kholmut boshaa
pato laakaný na kenh

Moti Lal Saqi (1936-1999) began life as a Government employee in the Department of Agricultural Development where, there being no work as such, he found bundles of time for study, a blessing for which he does express his gratitude. His subsequent postings were Radio Kashmir and J&K Cultural Academy. The Muse blessed him early in life, and he published his first collection of poems *Modurý Khaab* (Sweet dreams) in 1968. He grew up to be essentially a poet of the *nazam* and the *rubai*. Though he was influenced by the stalwarts of the progressive movement like Nadim, whom he admired enormously and from whom he learnt a lot about the art of poetry, he was never a poet of slogans and revolution. On the contrary he chose topics like *gabiraachh* (shepherd), *Yaavun* (youth), *Obur* (cloud) and other down-to-earth themes. His language is the pure and simple language of the soil, far removed from the sophistication which poets aim at for 'effective communication'. He never believed in literary extravanganza. His simplicity summed up his entire personality. His main aim being to communicate his feelings and experiences without any concealment, he never believed in undertones, but kept doing loud thinking till the last breath of his life. He has always aimed at recapturing the sweetness of folk songs. He experimented

with various forms successfully, but his evolution as a poet indicated a definite preference - the movement towards the brevity and punch of the *rubai*. Apart from publishing his own poems - *Modurý Khaab, Mansar, Neery Nagma, Aagar Neb*, and it must be said that he never allowed them to pile up and gather dust at home - he has brought out critical studies of poets like Swochha Kraal, Parmanand, Samad Mir and others, collections of folk stories, songs etc, and the complete works of some poets, the most notable being Sheikh-ul-Alam. Working in the Cultural Academy he did yeoman's service as editor of the Kashmiri Dictionary, Kashmiri Encyclopaedia and in other important assignments. Saqi's is a critical faculty combined with an enormous capacity for research. Whenever he expressed a critical opinion, it was accepted without reservation as the final thing, for it was never based on conjecture only. He received the Sahitya Akademi award for *Mansar* in 1981. For his contribution to Kashmiri language and literature, he was awarded Padma Shri.

Examples of his poems:

kot gatshak subhai tsu vuni nai gaash phol
aagaras kun aaba laavuk gav ha kaanh
daan khaahan manz gil chhi traavith zeeth lar
kulý lanjan swosaraay chhana vatharan gatshaan

gagar lagý mutý chhi yayth mandoori heri bwon
yiman gayi vaansa ath kooraan andree
vasaan chhus bor, thrasa pash chhus avezaan
che khatsmuts haayi raz ath taaka daaryam.

Those few left in this mansion now
Measure out their days with tears —
Aware that the crumbling walls would bury them anytime
Aware also of the agonising fact of helplessness.
They still seek solace in the forlorn hope

That since the foundation is strong enough
To have supported this mansion for ages,
It may not perhaps crumble down in their lifetime
Though, naked to their gaze, the burning *ghat*
Awaits them with gaping jaws.

pujav rat haakimee draalav imaamat
manduný tsoorav ti hyats haavuný karaamat
katal yemý kor su gav vaktuk akaabir
muluk yus looti sui gav sarva kaamat.

Makhan Lal Kanwal (1936) is mainly a ghazal writer, his theme being love. Moti Lal Naz (1937) has published his collection *Kenh nazam kenh ghazal.* Sultan Al Haq Shahidi (1937) writes mainly in Urdu and shows the influence of Iqbal. Mohammad Ahsan Ahsan (1937) writes both ghazal and *nazam*, in which one notices an unconventional and satiric attitude. Abdul Ghani Nadeem (1937) in his *nazams* and *ghazals* tries desperately to know the meaning of existence. His imagery is good.

Margoob Banihaali (1937) who teaches Persian in Kashmir University is a well-known 'new ghazal' enthusiast like Naji Munawar. He published his collection *Partavistan* quite early. The distinctive quality of his poetry is not being tied down to tradition and convention.

Chaman Lal Chaman (1937-1999) emerged as a poet in 1953-54, though his first poem appeared in *Kwong Posh* in 1952. His collection of poems, *Shabnam shaar*, won the Cultural Academy award in 1964. He was employed in the J&K Cultural Academy in a responsible position, and this organization provided the right environment for his temperament. He is mostly a *nazam* writer, and his theme is mainly love. What makes him different from other lyricists is that the beloved who rules his heart and soul is a creature of Chaman's imagination. There is every similarity between her and Fanny Brawne, the beloved of John Keats. In fact, Chaman is called by some the Keats of Kashmiri poetry, nursing in his heart

the eternal flame of unrequited passion. His poetry may be compared to the legendary canal of the milk of love. He has made experiments in technique and theme, as for instance, in *Husn Goshi Goshe*, describing the round of seasons, *Shar* (un-fulfilled yearning), *Yemi Saata Pheraan Chhum* (longing and regrets), *Guma Gay Patý* (inner desolation), etc. Chaman represented Kashmir at the National Conference of Poets in 1960. Examples of his poetry :-

dapiv maikashan yuthna darvaaza phutran
sadaa balý chhu khaasyan karaan myon saaqi

swo badlaan vihy' chhi badlaavin
bu chuus tsih saath ganzaraavaan
tsu vantas baalý roshun poz
amaapoz roshi kot taamat.

Mandoori dedyan chhi paaph alaandý
Shaheed naavas gindan chhi taajir
Ameer havasav chhu kaad kodmut
Shareef paharyan chhi tsoor tsaamutý
Gareeb khoonas chhi booly lajmuts

vaaryaah kaaluch me chhana tamý sunz khabar
zan chhu vaaraan myaani yemi seenuk mandar
gyavta yaa mata gyavta haa saazandaro
gatsh me paanas kyut syathaa panunui matsar

Prithvi Nath Kaul Saayil (1938) has the distinction of publishing eight of his books quite early and quite fast. He did commendable work as editor in a literary unit of the Social Education Department. When after this he was posted to the State Institute of Education as a teacher, his specific assignment was teaching the script. Another thing that must be mentioned is his love for children. One of his publications, *Lava hatý toorý* (The dew drenched buds) is a series of his songs for children. He

does not discard the conventional or traditional form, because his basic purpose is communication rather than innovation .

Rasul Pompur (1939), after serving for a short time in the Department of Animal Husbandry, was appointed as an assistant editor in the Cultural Academy. His first collection of poems, *Bu gyava kyaah* (What shall I sing?) was published quite early. He claimed to be a progressive poet, but this claim is not substantiated by his poems. The title of this collection is not a declaration of his intent but an exploration of the avenues available. However, his poems are delightful. So is his prose, and his critical evaluation incisive. His second collection of poems, *Safed Sangar* was published in 1983, and his latest, *Khanda* (Laughter) in 1988. He is not a conventional poet, and his *nazams* and ghazals are both laudable. In addition he writes short stories and essays. He won the Sovietland Nehru award in 1986, and translated Bedi's *Ek Chaadar Maili Si*.

Radhey Nath Masarrat (1939), who uses mainly free verse, portrays the sufferings of the people and the loneliness weighing on his own mind. Makhan Lal Bekas (1939) is another votary of the free verse and his theme is the vicissitudes of life, and he does make use of well-known characters from legend. His poems were published in various journals, and he is mainly a *nazam* poet. He also translated some poems of Tagore. Mohamed Ayub Betaab (1939) who has attempted both ghazal and *nazam* is mainly devoted to the sensuous appreciation of beauty in all its forms. He presents it in various ways in unconventional language. He published his collection *Lol ta maay*. Ghulam Mohammad Shaad (1939) was powerfully influenced by Kamil. His ghazals show that the poet's handling of the language is more vital then the subject matter. He firmly believes that poetry cannot replace philosophy.

During this period the poets who made it their main aim to satirize individuals and society for the evils that

prevailed were Makhan Lal Mahaw, Khizar Magribi, Omkar Nath Shabnam, Ayub Sabir, Sharif-ud-din Parvaz and Zareef Ahmad Zareef.

One must also mention Ghulam Ahmad Gaash, Ghulam Ahmad Ajir, Rafiq Ahmed Raaz, Nishat Ansari, Abdul Rahman Azad, Raghu Nath Kastoor, and Manzoor Hashimi for their contributions. Ansari's *Gulnaar* appeared in 1981— normal lyrics, *na'at, hamad*, prose poems, and poems in regular metre.

Farooq Nazki (1940) was fortunate in not having to wait to sail into an environment of letters, because he was born in it as the son of the very well-known author of *Namrood naamaa*, Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki. He flowered into a poet quite early. After serving for two years as editor of *Mazdoor*, a daily newspaper, he was associated with the J&K Cultural Academy on the editorial staff of the Kashimiri Dictionary. From here he moved over to Radio Kashmir as news reader and gradually rose to be the Director of this organization and later on the Director of the Doordarshan Centre at Srinagar. As poet he was influenced by Lal Ded, Krishna Razdan, Maqbool Shah Kraalawaari, Ghalib, Mir and Faiz. He is essentially a romantic lyricist.

Sajjud Sailani (1941) apart from being a poet, is a dramatist and painter too. His ghazals have been well received.

Post 1980 Poetry

In this century Kashmiri poetry started dispensing with heavy Persian influence and developing a distinct identity in theme, form, metre and language. In the fourth decade the progressive movement fed people on false Utopian promises, and disillusion followed soon. Neverthless, the sixties and the seventies witnessed considerable creative activity, and the momentum continued in the last two decades, though with a slight difference. Apart from unmistakable progress made by

writers in their craftsmanship, there was also the unmistakable imprint of helplessness that was evident in the post-disillusion period, as can be seen in Rahi's *Son Gaam* in which he used the most effective satire, the tongue-in-the cheek statement, for the first time. The attitude of the poet watching the decline and fall of a civilization embodying pluralistic ethos more than anywhere else in India, can well be imagined.

For quite some time now - almost half a century - it has become fashionable to assert rather aggressively the special Kashmiri identity (called *Kashmiriat*), the radical essence of which is defined diversely by different people — Article 370 of the Constitution, handicrafts, et al. But the factor that had really held the Kashmiris together as a firmly knit family over the centuries was almost drowned in the din and noise of sloganeering over various passions that held sway in the eighties — *aazaadi*, Governor's rule, political strife and militancy etc . In the meantime, political chicanery and the attendant chaos in public life had its repercussions on normal civic life in various ways — tourist industry, rising unemployment, farcical elections, admission to colleges, etc. This period may well be called the night of disaster. In the decade of disillusion the poet used the weapon of satire with superb excellence. The ghastly reality that unveiled itself now struck him dumb. Even Arif's satiric darts failed to discover a specific target, for he now visualized in *Aalam Ashob* the whole world caught in the tentacles of evil, with each institution and organization an obedient vassal. Arif could only pray and hope for redemption one day. The prevailing mood now was helplessness, despair, at seeing a civilization withering away. In his poem *Khwodaayaa*, Rahman Rahi pictures the entire Kashmiri society entrapped helplessly in a cobweb, or as people floundering in a dry stream bed with hunger gnawing at their entrails. The moonlit balconies have disappeared, people are afraid to exchange pleasantries on the road, nobody dares attempt to understand what an idol symbolises:

We have to beware of our own shadow
The deadly snake may leap at us

Ghulam Mohammad Gamgeen's *Brum*, Mishal Sultanpuri's *Vaný Ditýmas*, and Farooq Nazki's *Kob Kul* also present the picture of a world gone haywire. And Mohammad Ayub Betaab has this to say in *Duhulý khaab*:

Raatý raatas daz nyendur
Kot yin sopan?
Vwoný pazan asi khaab bus
Dohalee vuchhiný.

Ghulam Hassan Taskeen in *Nazam* laments the pallor of *aaraval* (the yellow rose), Rahim Rahbar in *Zaal* talks of the crawling snakes and of how the spider is the victim of his own devices, caught in the web he himself has woven. Mirza Arif asks the *Harduk gwolaab* (autumn rose) why he should enter a garden where butterflies and bumble bees are no longer the same friendly types, where water lies frozen hard, where the bulbul has bloodshot eyes. Ahmad Zareef in *Booný* laments the merciless felling of the glorious chenars. Rasul Pompur in *Vuni ti Ganeemath* says it is a miracle that we are still together and is afraid the situation may not last long, for anything might happen tomorrow. The same is the theme of Raghu Nath Kastoor's *Sonchi Manza Neri Kyaah*. He finds the howling storm everywhere, with no sign of abating. He also points out:

See, he has crossed the Wular safe,
But the west wind hindered you.

There is a fugitive hope, however, as can be seen in Rahi:

Aalav gom kati taam
Samchheyi nyetha nany Lal
Shamas Faqeeran prov kharaaj

This fugitive hope that good will prevail in the end is also expressed by Ranjoor Kashmiri, Muzaffar Azim and Rafiq Raaz.

The end of the eighties marked the beginning of the forced exodus of a section of the Kashmiri society. And all the poets left in the valley found themselves strangulated by fear, the society being split into two parts — those who wielded guns and those on whom these guns were trained. Thus the very foundation on which the social edifice was built, the established values and principles seemed dissolved in unending smoke.

Ghulam Nabi Gaash, in *Ti Chhuna Pai* (No one knows) focuses his light on the tragedy thus:

Su osaa raakhyus kina Shiv,
ti chhuna pai
Kahaarav doli manz kyaah niv,
ti chhuna pai.

And Nadim:

Buthi baaseyam zeeth sadak,
Buthi vwophremuts, thwosi aamuts,
chhambý gaamuts.

And Mishal Sultanpuri:

Napursaanuchi yath bustee manz
Yus pyav tasý pyey paantsaalý kaav.

Makhan Lal Bekas feels that everything is being consumed in a swift fire (*Kaayirý Naar*). Majboor bewails the disappearance of lovely palaces and beautiful cities, 'leaving not a rack behind'.

This sense of tragic loss is more prominent in the poetry written in exile, the new environment of arid landscape and dry heat forcing a contrast with the valley. Thus this poetry is full of nostalgic remembrance. In this

Saqi and Majboor have the pride of place. Saqi's *Neery Nagma* is a masterpiece of a hundred *achhar murtsa* (verbal images), capturing the beauty and colour of Kashmir in their frame — an exercise rarely indulged in by any Kashmiri poet in this centruy. "I am neither modern nor ancient," he says, "I don't belong to a group or sect. This is just a poetic compostion." Apart from picturing the flora and the fauna of the valley, there is no doubt that he has succeeded in recapturing the purity, simplicity and greatness of the Kashmiri language. He uses words and phrases which seem to have been forgotten and not easily understood by the urban folk these days, e.g. *yukur, guhý ryoonz, tsuni haangur, budij*, etc. You find such words also in Nadim's *Son Vatan.*

Arjan Dev Majboor follows in his wake with *Tyol*, remembering the evening lamp lit on the open balcony, a boatwoman suckling her baby and *soofyaanaa* music filling the air. But these nostalgic memories do not wipe out the memory of the recent trauma. In *Raavan Tyol*, Majboor mentions a dead body lying in a ditch with none of the observers coming forward. "O, can't a Haatim wake up?" asks the poet. The same feeling is expressed by Farooq Nazki in his *Diary* and *Sonth.* And Jawahar Lal Saroor :

> Won't the morning sun rise again,
> the muezzin's call reverberate,
> the temple conch shed its silence?
> Will tomorrow also ominous be?

Moti Lal Saqi in his *Mandoor* (1984) weaves his thoughts round a crumbling mansion which the dwellers are loth to leave, though death seems to be sniggering at them all the time. In *Vaaraag* (1987) the smog from the funeral pyres is shown enveloping the whole landscape, blotting out the sun and making it impossible to breathe.

Figurative expression, so essential to communicate depth of feeling, can be seen in Betaab's *Matý Aab*, Farooq

Nazki's *Naad Laayai*, Saqi's *Vaaraag* or Rahi's *Yi Vyath Rozi Pakaan* (The *Vyath* will keep on flowing):

A year has ended, another begun.
The *Vyath* will keep flowing on.
The poor *chenar* is withering away.
The *Vyath* will keep flowing on.

This poetry also emphasizes the value of human friendship and camaraderie without which life falls to pieces. One finds this in Majboor (*Tyol*), Mohi-ud-din Gauhar (*Kalý Zarý Shaharuký Rozan Vaalý*), Saqi (*Sawaal*), and Jawahar Lal Saroor, Rafiq Raaz, Nishat Ansari, Mishal Sultanpuri, Mohan Lal Aash, Naazir Kwolagaamee. All poets, both in the valley and in exile, underline this quintessential trait and bewail its disappearance in recent times, as Rahman Rahi in his *Vuchhith Su Haal me Kaanchhov*.

Although the poetry of this period can be generally classified as topical literature, some poems do have a spiritual content, as for example, Kamil's *Tithuy me Var dito Deeva*, which has a traditional sweetness and a longing for spiritual enlightenment. Others written in this vein are Amar Nath Dhar's collection of *leelaas*, Som Nath Veer's *Poshi Ambar*, Mohi-ud-din Gauhar's *Taaph* and *Sath*. Moti Lal Saqi's *Tsenun ta Tsitarun* reveals various experiences in a graphic manner. He also speaks of faith being the greatest gift given by God, for it cures every defect and failing.

It must be mentioned that the *leelaas* of this period are generally not upto the mark, save for their musical content. As far as *nazams* are concerned, the two foremost are Majboor's *Tyol* and Betaab's *Matý Aab*.

Some poets, like Gaash, Gauhar and Farooq Nazki remained as *nazam* writers in the conventional manner. Some new entrants like Rafiq Raaz display the freshness and fragrance of nature in their poems :

Na vuchh me noora yupis manz yi gaamý gaam
na vuchhý me zoon phasemuts makaayi kaandas maaz
no vuchhý me tsoonthý kulich moor baara suutý namaan

Finally one would like to mention the following poets for their contributions: Ghulam Mohammad Rafiq, Ghulam Mohammad Lone, S Razi, Mohi-ud-din Rattanpuri, Shahbaaz Rajorvi, Sarvanand Kaul Premi, Ghulam Nabi Naazir, Shahid Badgani, Fayaaz Tilagami and Wafa Bhadarwahi.

It is heartening to find a breath of fresh air wafting in, which perhaps promises a bright future for Kashmiri poetry. It is amazing how, as Rahman Rahi wonders, not many were aware that a genuine poetic talent, Bimla Raina had blossomed in Anantnag before her *Reshý Maalyun Myon*, a collection of 298 *vaakhs* was published by Funkaar Cultural Organisation in 1998. It is remarkable that she uses the language of everyday speech to convey a depth of meaning. Her *vaakhs* show she has been influenced by all the great mystics of Kashmir from Lal Ded to Samad Mir, and has kept this tradition remarkably alive. These *vaakhs* indicate that Lal Ded has been her main inspiration, both in theme and form, and she has not let down her '*guru*'. Her command of the language is seen in her impeccable idiomatic use of the word horde, e.g. *metsi mushta dini, munanai daanyas tomul bani no, badith kaayida parun, yuth no dayi maay mashee*. Example of her *vaakhs:*

Kaný shechhý vanith gom manz kanas,
hatsi thaph karnam manz sahraav
thahraav dopnam kar manz manas
ada metsi vanas me ti sonth aav

Kunuy achhur omuk chhu parun
galaan moh, abimaan, andakaar

daarun dyaanai kunuy omkaar
mutsarana yivaan sahastradaar

Roph, trop deetan kotaah jandas,
rang ta rangavunai nov bani maa
naar zaalytan prath kuni andas
vandas ryetakol·andyaa zaanh

Naseem Shafai with her first poetry collection, *Darichi Mutsrith* (Windows Thrown Open) Kashmir Publications, 1999, has made her presence felt in the contemporary literary scene. The book is a reflection of human reactions to the spectre of terrorism and its impact on the lives of women in particular. The collection has some ghazals with rhyming couplets but most of her poems are written in blank verse. She comes through as a poet of modern sensibility.

6

Growth of Prose

Background

There is no prose to speak of, said Master Zinda Kaul in 1941. The earliest compositions that we hear about are poems like *Mahanaya Prakash*, the *vaakh* of Lalded and *shrukh* of Nunda Ryosh. There has thus been a continuous tradition in poetry ever since the dawn of creative writing in Kashmir. But Kashmiri prose has not been so fortunate. In a way it has always been there from the beginning, for the earliest to arrive on the scene is the spoken language, and that is prose. But formal literary prose is essentially functional and descriptive, whether it is used in all types of belles-lettres, journalism, in commercial or scientific texts etc. In all countries prose always arrived after poetry established a continuous tradition. In Kashmir it started developing in the last quarter of the 19th century. There were a number of factors responsible for this inordinately late arrival. Persian had exercised a stranglehold on all channels of expression, which was followed by domination by Urdu and later, by about the third quarter of the 20th century, by English, two languages with a modern flavour and greater market value. Kashmiri suffered because it never became a regional language (though it has been declared so), in the sense that it has never been the official language

of the state, like Bengali, Hindi, Marathi etc. It is an outcast in its own home and the distinction of being the official language belongs to Urdu, which is not the mother tongue of even a single individual in any part of the state. This preposterous situation is because of the multi-lingual composition of the state — Ladakhi, Kashmiri, Dogri. Thus Urdu was chosen. What added to the problem was the absence of a formal and standard script and the consequent chaos emerging from each individual designing his own diacritical marks. What was even more comical — one could call it atrocious — was even the poets misspelling the Kashmiri words when they could be more correctly written in the Perso-Arabic alphabet even without any diacritical marks, for example, '*chon*' was written as '*chaano*' and '*gratavol*' as '*gratavaaloo*'. They made mistakes even in end rhymes. These and so many more are the blessings of the Perso-Arabic script. "This wrong script," says Naji Munawar in *Kaashiri Adbuk Tawaareekh*, "was foisted on the Kashmiri language in the 14th-15th century. The script before it was Sharada, an offshoot of the Brahmi script and eminently suitable for our language. Most unfortunately it was discarded."

No attempt was made by anybody to select a proper script with the right diacritical marks till Prof S.K. Toshkhani adopted the Devanagari script with additional diacritical marks for use in the Women's Welfare School,which he had established in Srinagar. He wrote a number of books - text books in Kashmiri, language readers as well as *Granz Ved*, a text book of arithmetic with all the technical terms in pure Kashmiri, which was published in 1921. What is remarkable about Toshkhani's contribution in this field is that the terms he introduced were simple Kashmiri words already in existence. He has not coined tongue twisters drawn from other 'learned' languages as most people in his place would have done. Till then the script had been kept as poor and deformed as the language was rich. The writer of *masnavis*, for example, did not know how the phonemes particularly

Kashmiri could be indicated. They instead used mutilated words, as has already been pointed out.

Printing in Kashmiri started in 1821, when the Serampore Missionaries published a translation of the *New Testament* in the Sharada script. This was followed by versions of *Pentateuch* in 1827 and *Joshua Kings* in 1832. These were all in Sharada script. The British and Foreign Bible Society came forth in 1884, printing the same translations in the Perso-Arabic script. A translation of the entire *Bible* was published (in the same script) by the same society in 1899 at Ludhiana with the assistance of Yaar Mohammad Khan.

Earlier too, the spoken language was used by other religious missionaries. The Buddhist preachers did so long ago, as is evident from Nag Sen's *Milind Panhaa* (Questions asked), written in the form of a dialogue between preacher and seeker. *Brihat Kathaa* appeared in Prakrit times. In Budshah's time, Muslim preachers used the Kashmiri translation of Islamic texts for propagating their faith.

But it is was in 1879 that the first book in Kashmiri was printed, i.e. Kashmiri prose had graduated from mere translation of religious texts to other fields. The first book was on geometry. It was actually a rendering of the first part of Euclid printed on hand-made Kashmiri paper in the first printing press in Kashmir. The author was Pandit Mahadev Joo Gigoo, using 'Pandit Ram Joo Dhar' as his pseudonym. This, according to Isvara Kaul, was really the first Kashmiri book to see print. This was followed by Isvara Kaul's *Shabdamrita* (The Nectar of Kashmiri words), a treatise on Kashmiri grammar published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1898.

During this period also appeared Maulvi Yahaya's *Tafseer-i-Quraan* and Noorud-din Qari's *Masaayil*, both expounding Islamic tenets, and the style in which they were written gives evidence of the prose being heavily stilted and of ornate Persian diction. Another well-known book entitled *Kaashir Kitaab* by Agha Sayyed Mohammad

Maulvi was published in 1908 and again in 1913, though it was written much earlier, i.e. in 1888. The language in this book is also heavily Persianized.

Mir Waiz Maulvi Yusuf Shah translated the *Quran* in the second and third decades of this century. The book was published in Muzaffarabad, where the Maulvi had migrated after the partition. There were earlier attempts too made in this field by Mir Waiz Maulvi Yahaya and Ghulam Mohi-ud-din-Khan, Headmaster of the Islamia School and Maulvi Ahmed Shah Jami, but these were never published.

Publication of the works of the pioneers in Kashmiri literature began in 1918-19 when Shiti Kanth's *Mahanaya Prakash* and Bhaskar Razdan's *Lal Vaakh* were published. It is interesting that the script used in both is Devanagari. This significant change is due to perhaps two reasons :

1. Sharada was now an out-dated script, used by Kashmiri Pandits only for horoscopes and not understood by the laymen of this community too.

2. The Persian script used by Kashmiri writers with no diacritical marks produced problems both in reading and writing. It was, as has been mentioned earlier, a chaotic script till 1947. However, the credit for publishing Kashmiri works (mainly only poems, since precious little in other fields of creative writing existed) goes solely to Ghulam Mohammad Noor Mohammad. Most of what was written till 1775 was lost or had got mixed up or defectively recorded because of the oral tradition.

It was very recently, i.e. in 1940 that serious attention was paid to Kashmiri prose for the first time. Apart from being the medium of speech, it was never used for the multiple purposes which are its legitimate fields in any organized society. It was, strangely enough, used not even for private correspondence. For example, for all official correspondence it was Persian, and earlier still, Sanskrit.

Kashmiri has remained a spoken language all along, except that it has also been the medium used by the poet. But even there, those who were from the upper strata wrote in the official language that was also the medium of culture. This was the situation till 1947, for the greatest modern poets including Nadim, wrote in Urdu before switching over to the mother tongue. Land records are still maintained in Urdu. The Constitution is in Urdu. Speeches till recently were made in Urdu. Even in top-level conferences, the medium of communication is Urdu.

As mentioned earlier, the two most devoted lovers of the native language in the forties were Mahjoor, the great poet and Arif, a scientist who was the Director of Sericulture and a poet. They persuaded other poets to change their medium from Urdu to Kashmiri. But the first step in ushering in Kashmiri prose as the medium of everyday business was taken by a lesser man, Mohammad Amin (Ibn-i-Mahjoor) who started the first journal in Kashmiri in 1940. It was christened *Gaash* (Light) and was welcomed by everybody, including the elite and the fraternity of writers, as the fulfilment of a long-felt want. To start with, the contents of this journal were the news, a poem or two of Mahjoor and the column : "*Asun ta Gindun*" (Laugh and Play). That is how Kashmiri prose was born in the printed shape.

One of the difficulties faced at that time was the absence of a regular, standard, scientific script. Each writer devised his own diacritical marks, using *zer* and *hamza* liberally and fully confident that he had given the script the right shape. It was very much like what is happening now with the Devanagari script, used by some, and now with the Roman script used by some others. This did not present any difficulty as far as poetry was concerned because each poem travelled also by word of mouth and was indeed heard more often then read, so that the reader could guess accurately which word was where. But it was not so with a news item, a critical essay or other compositions that are not transmitted through

memory like a poem, and don't retain the same shape every time. However, the birth of this journal was a wonderful step and the difficulties of the script were to be sorted out and solved for ever by the Scripts Committee of the J&K Academy for Art, Culture and Languages set up for this purpose. We have been using the script they finally set their seal on since 1972.

Incidentally, the contribution of Kamil was commendable. In his *Kasshir Achhar Zaan,* he suggested additional *airaabs* (diacritical marks), which evoked response and fostered serious thinking on this vital aspect of the script.

Birth of formal prose

Introduction to this background was essential, as the developments that came fast after 1947 were more than the planners had anticipated, for avenues that did not exist suddenly opened up and demanded immediate attention. Ibn-i-Mahjoor must have been delighted, but would never have visualized the urgent need of the script in diverse fields of expression which now came into being. Thanks to the Cultural Congress, the writers who were in the progressive movement found the avenues of fiction, drama, disquisitional prose and criticism thrown open to them. The birth of Radio Kashmir on 31 July 1948 was a no less significant event, as it demanded systematic prose for news, talks, features and radio plays. Another field that opened up for literary artists was the most important literary journal, *Kwong Posh* (The Saffron Flower), started by the Kashmir Cultural Congress in 1949. (It stopped publication in 1952, as mentioned elsewhere). Other journals also appeared subsequently, but to *Kwong Posh* belongs the unique distinction of having been an ideal literary journal in this most important period of the renaissance of Kashmiri literature. "It was innovative, encouraged experimentation and became a forum for literary debate and discussion, providing an impact on

the small but growing group of literary writers. Though it was the vehicle of the ideology of progressive writers, its influence cannot be underestimated, for it did for Kashmiri what the journal *Hans* did for Hindi under the editorship of the famous novelist, Prem Chand" (Braj B Kachru : *Kashmiri Literature).* During this period the Cultural Academy also undertook the task of translating the Constitution of India into Kashmiri. The job was assigned to Mirza Ghulam Hasan Beg Arif and Prithvi Nath Pushp, who had to do it twice over, as the first draft was not satisfactory, revealing as it did the povetry of Kashmiri as regards vocabulary and even a standard pattern of spelling with the result that the two parts did not read as parts of one and the same document (JL Kaul : *Studies in Kashmiri*).

The first newspaper in Kashmiri was born in the Church Missionary Hospital at Drogajan, Srinagar with an inevitable missionary slant, to publicize work done in the hospital. This may be called laying the foundation stone of journalism in Kashmir.

In 1936 Prof J.L. Kaul introduced a Kashmiri section in the SP College magazine, *Pratap*, the first student editors being Nand Lal Ambardar and Ghulam Ahmad Fazil. The Kashmiri section of *Pratap* has continued ever since and has all along been an unusual source of inspiration for both poetry and prose. In a way, most modern Kashmiri writers have had their baptism in this journal. Later, the Amar Singh College magazine, *Lalla Rukh*, followed suit.

But the first commercial venture was Mahjoor's *Gaash*, and for this all credit goes to his son, Ibn-i-Mahjoor. However, it didn't last long. When asked why it was so, the poet Mahjoor put the blame on paper not being available. Perhaps he was misinformed, for paper was available in abundance. There were other sporadic ventures in the field. But the confusion about the script led to one journal after another closing down, till in 1949 the Cultural Conference started the cultural journal,

Kwong Posh with Mahjoor, Nadim, Arif, Aziz Haroon and Noor Mohammad Roshan as editors. The *Bazm-i-Adab*, Delhi brought out the journal, *Pamposh* in 1957, and both these, being the mouth piece of the Progressive Movement, stopped publication when Progressivism itself was dead. *Son Adab* and *Sheeraaza*, the literary journals of the Cultural Academy have continued to be published to this day and have done remarkable service to Kashmiri literature by bringing out special numbers. And the most important publication of this academy is the Kashmiri dictionary which was completed in 1971. The Kashmiri-Urdu and Kashmiri-Hindi-English editions have so far remained a promise. The Kashmiri Pandit community in Delhi started the journal, *Kaashur Samachar* which is in the Devanagari script and continues regular publication. In November 1953 the journal *Gulrez* made its appearance, but did not last long. Another journal having the same title and with a better get up and a steadier script than the earlier one also did not last long. The Kashmiri journal, *Desh* (edited by Sham Lal Sadhu) which appeared in 1957 also had a brief career). Arif and Khayaal started an Urdu periodical, *Taameer* with articles on language and literature. In Oct-Nov 1960, the editor, Mohammad Yusuf Taing started a Kashmiri section of this journal, but this also stopped though it had acquired a certain reputation. In April 1962 Khayaal started the weekly newspaper, *Watan*. This also stopped after a very promising start. After this the Field Survey Department brought out the fortnightly, *Chaman* in 1965. The Social Education Department produced the weekly *Gaash* during Nadim's tenure as Assistant Director, Social Education (1965-1969). This stopped in 1967. In 1968, Amin Kamil brought out the literary journal, *Neb* which also stopped after 15 issues. Then Ghulam Rasool Santosh started *Kaashur Adab*. Its issues were sporadic till 1978. Shafi Shauq and Gulshan Majeed started a weekly journal, *Aash* in 1970. In 1974 the Cultural Academy brought out a weekly newspaper, *Kaashur Akhbar*, edited by Taj

Begum Renzoo. Halka Adab (Literary Circle), Haajan has brought out an annual journal, *Wolarukẏ Malar*, which attracts worthwhile literary contributions. Many young enthusiasts are constantly lured by the desire to start a journal. But all these new publications prove ephemeral. Perhaps one of the serious deficiencies the Kashmiri society suffers from is the absence of the reading habit. A periodical started by a handful of people for another handful of people is bound to run on the rocks. There is no reading habit in evidence in the entire state. Nowhere in any place outside the state does a newspaper or a journal in any language perish because of such widespread disinterest. Each paper and each journal in all the other regional languages boasts of a large circulation list. Very few in Kashmir are in the habit of reading a Kashmiri book or a Kashmiri newspaper. The basic reason is undoubtedly the tragic fact that Kashmiri is not taught in schools, with the result that the valley has the distinction of being the home of the largest number of illiterates in their own language.

In addition to the periodicals published in the valley, the following are published outside:

Kaashur Samachar (Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi), *Kashyap Samaachaar*, later rechristened *Kheer Bhawani Times* (Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Jammu), *Vitasta* (Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Calcutta), *Naad* (Kashmiri Samaaj, Delhi), *Patrakaar* (Bhagwan Gopi Nath Trust, Delhi), *Praznath*, Jammu (for articles on the Kashmiri language), *Sati Sar* (Sampriti Kashmiri Bhasha & Sanskriti Pratishthan, Jammu). The last is a literary journal in Kashmiri alone, the best channel for creative writers.

Linguistics, Literary Criticism and Essays

There is no doubt that literary research was initiated in Kashmir by western scholars. Dr Hilton Knowles collected Kashmiri idioms and proverbs from all over the

valley and published them under the title *Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings* in the eighties of the last century. This was followed soon after by his *Kashmiri Folk Tales* in the Roman script. About the same time came Wade's *Kashmiri Grammar* and Sir Walter Lawrence's *Valley of Kashmir.* The German scholar, Burkhardt's three books on Kashmiri grammar were published in 1887. Earlier, in 1841 the English scholar Edgeworth had published his paper on Kashmiri grammar and idiom in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. The most outstanding contribution in this field was that of George Abraham Grierson with his book *Essays on Kashmiri Grammar* published in 1889. He had been inspired to do this after he read Ishwara Kaul's *Kaashur Shabdamrath.* His major project in which he was helped by Pandit Mukund Ram Shastri was his monumental dictionary of the Kashmiri language, published in 1932. Another important contribution in this field was R L Turner's comparative dictionary of all Indo-Aryan languages. Some Kashmiri Pandits, particularly Sontý Pandit, also made a contribution in this field during the Afghan rule, giving Persian equivalents of Kashmiri words. A similar contribution was made by Pandit Ishwara Kaul. Other notable works of western scholars were Sir Aurel Stein's Hatim's *Tales*, (already mentioned earlier), Graham Bailey's *Four-fold Consonant System in Kashmiri Language* in 1936 and his *Pronunciation of Kashmiri* in 1937 and Eldeman's *Jazyki Kashmiri.*

Abdul Ahad Azad was the first Kashmiri author to initiate serious research on Kashmiri language and literature. His three volume Kashmiri *Zabaan aur Shayiree* in Urdu maybe called the beginning of literary criticism, but it could perhaps be called only a baptismal ceremony, for real critical evaluation started only after 1949. Before 1947, others too attempted literary criticism, but their compositions too, like Azad's were not in Kashmiri. The first person to fire a shot in this direction was Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Hajini with his *Nasruch Kitaab* and *Mukalaat*,

followed by *Gaamav Manza Pheery Pheery* and *Luka Ras*.

The Cultural Academy brought out a collection of folk songs, and the most notable effort in collecting these songs was made by the dedicated and versatile author, Moti Lal Saqi. Apart from J L Kaul translating and editing the poetry of Lal Ded and publishing it with a monograph in English and Nand Lal Kaul Talib translating it into Urdu, literary criticism in Kashmiri was also now on the wing. The books one might mention as significant contributions in this line are Amin Kamil's *Noor Naama* (which does not give all the shrukh of Sheikh-ul-Alam but only illustrative examples) and Mohammad Yusuf Taing's critical essays published in various journals. He (Taing) also edited the complete works of Maqbool Shah Kraalawaari and his *masnavi, Gulrez*. In both, his scholarly intoduction and analysis gave a new dimension to literary criticism. Equally scholarly is his 60-page introduction to Valiullah Motoo. What distinguishes him is objective assessment.Other collected works also appeared, like those of Ameer Shah Kreeri edited by Manzur Hashimi, of Wahab Hajini edited by Mohi-ud-din Hajini and of Abdul Ahad Azad edited by Padam Nath Ganju. In 1963 the well-known book on *soofiana mooseekee, Kaashur Sargam* was published by the Academy, with the musician Sheikh Abdul Aziz as the editor. Baljinath Pandit's learned prefatory essays to *Raamaayan* was another significant contribution. Autar Krishan Rahbar's *Kaashiri Adbuk Tawareekh* (Vol 1) is the first attempt at compiling a history of Kashmiri literature in the Kashmiri language, with a long introduction to the birth of the Kashmiri language and detailed exposition on the works of the pioneers of Kashmiri poetry. It is certainly a milestone in critical evaluation. Another significant name is Abdul Rahman Rahi with his insistence that a critic's faculties and opinions must not remain circumscribed by convention, that on the contrary the windows of his soul must remain open to absorb all that is fruitful in western criticism.

His critical essays have been published in various journals, including *Anhaar* which he himself started at the Kashmir University and which has rendered valuable service to Kashmiri letters. *His Shaarut ta Tamiky' Takreebee Ajza (Sheeraza*, 1972) was highly praised as a milestone in Kashmiri literary criticism. His collection of critical essays, *Kahwat* (Touchstone) was published in 1979. In the meantime, *Anhaar* grew in stature with the Kashmiri Department becoming a post-graduate and research centre. Other critics of note are Ghulam Nabi Firaq, Rasul Pompur, Gulshan Majeed, Naji Munawar and Shafi Shauq. Firaq introduces the reader to modern critical concepts. Gulshan Majeed came out with a critical survey of the poetry of Firaq and Rahi. Each in his own way stresses the importance of new values, of modern critical assessment. Majeed gives a critical evaluation of the leading modern poets, Rahi and Firaq. Dr Hamidi's essay on modern poetry deserves mention, coming as it does from a well-known literary critic, though he writes usually in Urdu and only occasionally in Kashmiri. Shafi Shauq (*Zabaan ta Adab*, his critical essays on contemporary poets), Mishal Sultanpuri (*Kaashiri Ghazaluk Irtiqa)*, Rattan Lal Shant (*Kaashiri Dramahuk Irtiqa*), Ghulam Nabi Nazir (*Kaashir Shaayiree*) and Abdul Ahad Hajini (*Kaashiris Adabas Pyath Akh Nazar)* are other important names in the field of literary criticism. Though Nazir's is conventional criticism, yet it is the first work on Kashmiri criticism in which terms and forms etc are lucidly explained.

The collected works of authors published by the Cultural Academy have valuable critical introductions, eg Rashid Nazki's in *Kuliyaat-i-Nadim*, containing one long essay on the Kashmiri na'at or Moti Lal Saqi's in *Samad Mir.* Saqi's *Aankavan* is a collection of critical essays on some authors and subjects not having received any attention so far (Swocha Kraal, Karam Buland, Hari Taramati, Shah Qalandar and Ghulam Nabi Zaag). Amin Kamil's *Sufi Shayiree* and *Roohanee Phalsafaa* deserve

mention. Mohammad Amin Kamil's introduction to three volumes of *Sufi Shaayir*, in which he discussess the origins, tenets and spiritual disciplines of Sufism, Vedanta and Trika Shaivism, "are a first attempt at religio-philosophical expositions in Kashmir, a laudable attempt though marred by several grave faults. He has not discussed the merits of the controversial views. There are a large number of mistakes of orthography like 'Bhaagwat Gita' for 'Bhagwat Gita' etc. His contribution consists not in these long introductions but rather in his brief comments on the life and poetry of Sufi poets." (J.L. Kaul: *Studies in Kashmiri*).

Abdul Khaliq Tak's *Kaashryuk Alaaqavaad Phera* is a valuable work of linguistic research. Tak indicates tehsil-wise speech variations, interaction with outside languages in bi-lingual tracts, and gives a section for technical terms in use in various professions. This book preserves a word hoard from extinction, and gives new words for new concepts.

The Academy brought out certain special numbers of *Sheeraaza* like *Kaashur Lok Adab Number, Drama Number, Ghazal Number, Masnavi Number, Jangnaama Number, Kashir Zabaan ta Adab* and also *Kaashir Asan Traay* with a fine essay on wit, humour and satire.

Khayal's contribution to prose has been considerable. He translated Aristotle's *Poetics* and wrote *Gaashiry Munaar* in which he introduces the reader to the most outstanding poets of the world. His *Mahmood Gami* was not found satisfactory by some and had to be done all over again by Naji Munawar to whose credit also goes his work on Maqbool Amritsari and Shah Qalandar's *masnavis*.

His critical essays are included in his book *Pursaan*. He is also the first to produce a complete grammar of the Kashmiri language. Other prose writers like Iqbal Nath Vanpoh, Mohammad Amin Ibn-i-Mahjoor and Ghulam Mohammad Shad also deserve to be mentioned for their dedication to disquisitional prose as well as literary criticism.

It was heartening to know that with the eighties came the era of serious objective literary criticism. Other writers also realized that the critical faculty is as vital as the creative faculty and in their compositions, one sees objective evaluation being practised even when they discuss eminent contemporary authors. Ghulam Nabi Nazir's *Kitaab*, a collection of critical essays and research papers, came out in 1980, Ghulam Nabi Aatash's *Tahqeeq* in 1982. About the same time Mohammad Yusuf Taing published *Talaash*, a collection of his critical essays on diverse subjects. Others who did valuable work in this field were Moti Lal Saqi, Mishal Sultanpuri, Basheer Bashar, Ghulam Mohammad Shad, Iqbal Nath Vanpoh and others.

Finally, there is the doyen of the Kashmiri essay, Mohammad Zamaan Azurdah who raised the essay itself as a distinct literary form, instead of one to be used only in the service of other fields like criticism etc. His *Fikar ta Tikar* (1980) was followed by *Essay*, which won the Sahitya Akademi award, and *Nuna Posh* (1986). He has also to his credit Urdu essays (*Ghubari Khayaal* and *Sheereen Ke Khatoot* won the UP Academy award in 1985), short stories and critical essays in Urdu, but we want to emphasize his role as the true pioneer in the field of the Kashmiri essay. Not that nobody had attempted an essay earlier. The first Kashmiri essay which appeared in Santosh's journal, *Kaashur Adab* in March 1967, was written by Rasool Pompur. And there were others like Moti Lal Saqi, Manzoor Hashimi, Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, Nishat Ansari, Rahim Saajid and Jagan Nath Khaibari whose essays appeared in Kamil's *Neb* and Fazil Kashmiri's *Chaman*. But Azurdah was the first writer to give the essay a distinct identity, which set a new tradition in Kashmiri literature. His essays cover a wide range of subjects. Written in facile and idiomatic Kashmiri, they are characterized by wit and satire, incisive but not malicious, which acts as a gadfly on the social pachyderm. He is associated with various literary and cultural

organizations and has been a member of various advisory boards, including the Sahitya Akademi, and is Vice-President of the Kashmir Cultural League.

Literary criticism in Kashmir entered a new phase during the nineties. Objective assessment was now more in evidence, as also uninhibited detail. This refreshing trend was initiated by some earlier critics too, most noticeably by Rahman Rahi.

Gulshan Majeed in his long essay on '*Sheikh-ul-Alam Sunzi Shaayiree Manz Shahrashob*' attempts to show how Sheikh-ul-Alam's poetry is a lament over the multiplication of social evils in his time, how despite the arrival of a new religion, the social structure had remained the name, as also the merciless extortion of taxes and the helplessness of the people :

aaravalan naagaraada rovukh
saada rovukh tsooran maviz
muda garan gora panditha rovukh
raaza honz rovukh kaavan manz.

(Among the rocks the fount was lost,
among the theives, the saint,
among the ignorant the mentor
and among the crows the swan)

He also asserts that Sayyed Mir Ali Hamdani came to Kashmir only once and not thrice as believed by many, without any historical evidence. (Ref Abdul Quayoom Rafiqi : *Kasheeri Manz Sufism*, pp 31,32 and Ghulam Rashil Bhat: *Taareekh-i-Sayyed Ali* in *Son Adab*, 1960)

In his critical essay on Wahab Pare's *Masnavi, Shahnama*, while praising the poet for using Kashmiri (not Persianised), he comes down heavily on the defective manuscript with several passages missing or messed up, may be because of the faulty script, aided and abetted by the publisher Noor Mohammad. The first three volumes are modelled on Firdausi — in fact one could call them a close translation — while the fourth one *khilafatnaama*,

describing the conquests of Islam, is not even remotely connected with Firdausi's masterpiece.

The Kashmir University journal, *Anhaar* rendered valuable service to literary criticism by bringing out towards the end of the century (1999) a set of essays on Kashmiri drama, the oldest literary form, which had its beginning as *baanda paathur* (folk drama). In this issue, P.N. Pushp, Farooq Fayaazi and Rukhsana Tabassum discuss this ancestor of drama in detail, while others also do touch upon it. There are scholarly essays, e.g. on 'Euripides' by Ghulam Nabi Khayyaal, on 'King Lear' by Naji Munawar on 'Drama and Reality' by Shafi Shauq and on Mohi-ud-din Hajini's *Grees sund gara* as the first Kashmiri play with social reality as its theme.

Harikrishna Kaul in his "Dramatis Personae in Kashmiri Drama" says that since mime is indisputably the progenitor of drama, dramatis personae naturally recreate the motley crowd of human beings ranging from the king to the beggar, including now the politicians who are objects of satire. (A.M. Lone : *Taqdeer Saaz)* or star-crossed individuals (H. Kaul : *Yeli Vatan Khur Yivaan*) . Bertold Brecht's *Theory of Alienation* and *Theatre of the Absurd* emphatically lay down that if life itself has no meaning, making it look purposeful in drama is wrong. But despite the chaos enveloping our society, everything in drama does remain a symbolic or figurative expression, as is exemplified in Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, where the reader is free to identify the metaphor in his own way.

The Drama

The staple diet of both drama and the short story has always been the spoken language. With these forms fast developing as the main channels of communication between artist and audience in a big way since the mid - 20th century, the medium of prose has not only established itself as an inevitable medium but also

developed various new shades and nuances.

A glance at the dramatic activity in the state would help us understand the new developments. Drama was not a thriving art in Kashmir because of the paucity of dramatists and the absence of theatres. Histrionic talent and the people's craving for theatrical entertainment found fulfilment therefore in folk dances, and these were very popular. They are so even now. The professional groups, called *baands* — 'baand' means both 'actor' and 'jester' — are mainly from Akingam, Vathura and Bumai. They are itinerant artists and perform on an open stage, presenting a composite programme of dance, drama, mimicry and clowning, with the *surnai* (Kashmiri *shahnai*) providing background music. The final item is a prayer for benediction, just as a classical recital of Indian music always ends with the raag *Bhairavi*. Each group now has a repertoire, thanks to the pioneering effort of Mohammad Sultan Bhagat of Akingam. The programme is called *baanda paathur* ('paathur' means drama). Side by side with the *baands* being constantly available, there was a steady and growing exposure to literary drama, with troupes coming from outside the state, the most well-known being the Agha Hasher group. The *baands* also staged the regular plays of Agha Hasher, Betab, Ehsaan Lukhnavi and Master Rahmat, which were very much liked. It also fostered in the minds of the local lovers of drama a desire to build a theatre in Kashmir. One of them, Ved Lal Dhar Vakil, whose love of music and drama was certainly a consuming passion, founded a dramatic company, but they staged only Urdu plays. The most popular stage artist, Jagan Nath Saqi belonged to this company. In the same period, students of Islamia High School, Srinagar staged the first-ever Kashmiri play.

The pioneers of literary drama in Kashmir were Nand Lal Koul, Tara Chand Bismil, Ghulam Nabi Dilsoz and Mohi-ud-din Hajini. Koul's *Satuch Kahwat* (Touchstone of truth), the story of Raja Harish Chandra, with excellent dialogues (but heavily Sanskritized), was written in 1929

and presented on a crude, improvised stage in Raghunath Mandir for four years (1929-32). The phonograph recording of Ghulam Nabi Dilsoz's plays, *Lailaa Majnoon* and *Shirin Farhaad* by Raj Pal Gramophone Company became very popular. Bismil's *Satuch Vath* (The path of truth) and Hajini's *Grees Sund Gara* (The peasants' home) remained closet plays.

The theatre in Kashmir got a shot in the arm with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), the drama unit of the Communist Party of India, setting up a centre in the state. This was due to the untiring efforts of the actor — producer, Balraj Sahni, who was one of the stalwarts of the progressive movement in India. Another thing that happened coincidentally was the establishment of the Cultural Front (later rechristened Cultural Congress) whose primary aim was the same as that of IPTA, i.e.,to reach the masses. This took the theatre to rural Kashmir as the most effective means of carrying the message to the masses and drawing their attention to the burning social, cultural and political problems. Drama, the audio-visual educator with the spoken language of the masses as the medium, proved to be very effective. What is more, the writers who had joined the progressive movement felt the surge of a new life in them. They were keen on producing plays for the purpose of creating a social awakening and realistic appraisal of the multiple problems that faced the common man. This new atmosphere brought two things — the revival of drama and the growth of confidence in writers that literary drama could develop as an art form in Kashmir.

Upto 1947, political plays had no chance of being approved by the State censor. Prem Nath Pardesi, a talented writer, who was the first dramatist in the new movement, had the sad experience of his play, *Bata har* (The food quarrel) being rejected by the censor and the manuscript confiscated and lost. But after the tribal raid in October 1947, he wrote his second play, *Shaheed Sherwaani*, the story of the martyrdom of Maqbool

Sherwaani who halted the advance of the raiders at Baramulla. It had effective dialogue and dramatic situations, with songs written by the poet Mahjoor. This play was staged but was not a success, owing to inadequate stagecraft. Before the Cultural Congress became the Cultural Conference, some plays were written like Jagan Nath Wali's *Zoon*, with the life of Habba Khaatoon as the theme. The same time saw the emergence of new dramatic talent like Noor Mohammad Roshan, Som Nath Zutshi, Ali Mohammad Lone and Pushkar Bhan. Among the plays that made their appearance at this time, the most notable were Ali Mohammad Lone's *Viz chhi saaný* (The time is ours), Noor Mohammad Roshan's *Son Sansaar* (Our world) and Amin Kamil's *Pagaah Chhu Gaashdaar* (Tomorrow will be bright).

It is against this background that Nadim made his appearance in 1949 (when landlordism was abolished in the State) with his first musical play, *Zameen Chhi Greesý Sunz* (The land is the tiller's), emphasizing apart from the establishment of a classless society, the cultural unity of the state. His second musical, *Vaavan Vonnam* (The Breeze told me) staged by the Dance and Drama Group in 1951 was also staged in Peking at the Peace Conference in China. On his return from the Peace Conference in 1952, he wrote his famous opera, *Bombur ta Yamburzal* (The Narcissus and the Bumblebee), in 1953, having been inspired by the Chinese classical opera he had seen there, *The White Hair Girls*. He made this opera completely Kashmiri in every way, based on the legacy of folk songs and dance. It was a significant revolt against the belief that had entrenched itself, that Kashmiri drama could not exist as an independent entity. It was thus a signal service to Kashmiri drama to liberate it from the shackles of other languages and literatures and foreign stories, myths and legends. The story is based on a popular legend, the language is the language of the people and the complication, denouement and the totality of the effect make it unmatched to this day. It was staged again in

1956 with Khrushchev and Bulganin as the chief guests. It was directed by Pran Kishore, with music provided by Mohan Lal Aima. His next opera, *Hemaal ta Naagiraay* based on the most moving folk tale in Kashmir was written in collaboration with Noor Mohammad Roshan, who also acted in the play as *sutradaar* (like the Chorus in Greek drama). It failed as a son-et-lumiere presentation at Hari Parbat because the mixture of several techniques — opera, shadow play, drama — was poor. In his next poetic drama, *Nekee ta Badee* and also later in *Shihil Kul*, the basic theme is that universal love is not confined to the humans as a separate species and that nature protects all species. His next was the third full-scale opera, *Vitasta*, in which Nadim presents the river *Vitasta*, (Jhelum) as the embodiment of the perennial culture of Kashmir. This exquisite musical is based on the love of a Naga princess and a Pisacha prince. The actors were students from all over the State and Ghulam Rasool Santosh's mastery of the brush and Bansi Lal Dogra's choreography helped in making it a great stage success. Produced by J&K Cultural Academy and directed by Pran Kishore, with costumes designed by Santosh, this opera was presented on 7th Feb 1977 at the All India Arts and Crafts Society in New Delhi, and the *Times of India* paid it a glowing tribute, calling it a glorious feast of colour, dance and drama. Soon it was staged also in Lucknow, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mysore and Tiruvananthapuram — the first Kashmiri opera to win international recognition. The songs have been preserved on LP discs by the Gramaphone Company of India.

Nadim with his plays and operas gave an affirmation to Kashmiri drama. And since the days of propagandist literature were over long ago and his energies were all focussed on creative writing shorn of the shibboleths of progressive art, one could say that modern Kashmiri drama was born in that period.

Those who were inspired to follow him were Amin Kamil (*Raav Roopee*), Muzaffar Azim (*Soný Kisur*) and

Ghulam Rasool Santosh (*Gulrez, Aazaadee*) to mention only a few. The story element in most of these plays, with the exception of *Soný Kisur* and *Gulrez*, is somewhat deficient.

Soon after the phase of ebullience generated by the extremely popular operas with Kashmiri folk lore and myth as the theme, a new wave in drama was already evident. The new writers felt that drama, or any kind of creative writing, could not be eternally wedded to propaganda alone. It had basically to be a work of art. As a consequence, the plays that made their appearance now had a distinct freshness of tone, being no longer tethered to the tenets of the progressive movement. Among the first of the new products, Pushkar Bhan's *Tan Tadaakh*, a farce as far removed as possible from commitment to progressive art and emotional effervescence about local song and legend, is perhaps the most significant and is the forerunner of his famous creation, *Machaamaa* which we shall talk about later. Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, who had already made a name as a short story writer, tried his hand in this field too and wrote three plays — *Nasti Hond Sawaal, Sheesha ta Sangistaan* and *Aapan Hor Jung*. The last one, a comedy, is a realistic portrayal of women of the middle class, *Sheeha ta Sangistaan* was staged under the auspices of Jashn-e-Kashmir (Kashmir Festival) which provided a forum for staging various plays till its discontinuance in 1962. After this came Pushkar Bhan's *Hero Machaamma* and Som Nath Sadhu's *The Grand Rehearsal*. Autar Krishen Rahbar's *Talaash* is a realistic drama. His other plays *Bu Chhus Tsoor* and *Aulaad* etc, have all a succinct plot structure but the subtle satire which is the beauty of all his short stories is missing here. Sham Lal Dhar Bahaar's *Kar Votli Insaan, Yi Vath Kot Gatshi, Qaumee Sipahee* and *Kahvat* are other popular plays written at that time.

The building of Tagore Hall in Srinagar in 1960 was indeed an epoch-making event and gave a very great fillip

to drama. A popular stage was a long-felt need. Now at last drama had travelled from the open-air stage of the *baands* to a regular modern theatre, providing so many facilities and new techniques essential for stage production. The Cultural Academy too fostered the development of drama, and it also happened coincidentally that the best available stage talent made their appearance and their names are inextricably linked with the growth of drama right from the beginning (i.e, the fifties) to the present day. In fact their names need no introduction — Pran Kishore, Pushkar Bhan, Som Nath Sadhu, Jagan Nath Saqi, Mohammad Sultan Pandit, Nizam-ud-din, Sharif-ud-din, Sudamaji Kaul, Neba Begum, Kantyayani Ganju, Brij Kishori, Shanta Koul, Naema Sahib, Mariam Begam, Pyarelal Handoo, Ashok Jelkhaani, Moti Lal Kemmu, Ghulam Nabi Baba — to name only the most prominent ones.

The time also witnessed the growth of new dramatic clubs in towns and villages and the start of the annual drama festival. The work done by the Song and Drama Division, Rang Manch, Navrang, Bhagat Theatre (Akingaam), Regal Theatre (Anantnag), Gulshan Theatre, Dramatic Club (Shupian) and Himalaya Theatre was praiseworthy indeed.

While the Kashmiri theatre has been seriously attempting to modernise itself, the old folk theatre (*paathur*) too has advanced with the times because of the untiring effort of the great master, Mohammad Subhan Bhagat. One of the most well-known modern dramatists, Moti Lal Kemmu, writes *paathur* also. His *Poz Apuz*, *Taqdeer*, *Yiti Banavun*, *Havas* etc. have been quite successful. And with his *Trinov* (3 short plays) Kemmu raised the *paathur* to the stature of literary drama. It must be mentioned that the folk-theatre artists of Akingaam, out of a needless feeling of inferiority, sometimes incorporate some irrelevant material to give the *paathur* a modern look. Their repertoire of various types of *paathur* includes *darza paathur*, *bata paathur*, *raaza paathur*,

which are popular because of their traditional style. And the music of the *surnai*, lilting songs sung in rice fields and rural simplicity are essential ingredients of a successful and popular performance. One might mention here that a one-act *paathur, Pardas Tshaayi* written by Ghulam Hassan Ibn-i-Bhagat.

Radio Kashmir has rendered invaluable service to drama. Ali Mohammad Lone was the first to bring out his radio plays regularly. Pran Kishore who was incharge of the section of broadcasting plays made a beginning with inviting radio plays in four segments, the first segment for Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, the second for Som Nath Zutshi, the third for Ali Mohammad Lone and the fourth for Zutshi again. Out of these, Lone's segment got the national award for broadcasting. Pran Kishore also won this award. Lone's play *Ta Vyath Rozi Pakaan* was selected for the National Programme of Plays, translated into various languages and broadcast simultaneously. Kashmiri plays had the pride of place in the National Programme of Plays right upto 1990. Similarly Kashmiri radio documentaries also. Pran Kishore's *Aab ta Hayaat* (Water and life) got the best award for Kashmiri documentary and was sent as the Indian entry to the highest competition, Prix Italia held in Milan in 1978. Pran Kishore was a member of the International Jury for Radio Interview. The same documentary was sent by AIR as an entry for the Asian Broadcasting Union Festival. Pushkar Bhan, Som Nath Sadhu, Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, Moti Lal Kemmu, Autar Krishan Rahbar, Bansi Nirdosh, Som Nath Zutshi, Shankar Raina, Hriday Kaul Bharati, Kamil, Bashir Dada, Shabnam Qayoom, Mushtaq Mohammad and Sajjud Sailaani also were regular contributors. Along with radio plays, some operas were also broadcast, the most prominent being Rahman Rahi's *Lol Yeli Motas Phor*, Muzzaffar Azim's *Sonў Kisur* and Moti Lal Saqi's *Hayaatan Zyoon*. The most outstanding radio play was Pushkar Bhan's *Machaama*, a farce which never aims at a realistic portrayal of life — in fact all the characters are caricatures

— nor at any literary excellence, but exposes all types of weaknesses, human and social. *Machaama* has become a type. The artists who worked untiringly and remarkably well are Jagan Nath Saqi, Pushkar Bhan, Som Nath Sadhu, Mohammad Sultan Pandit,and Shanta Kaul.

The radio plays that have remained very popular all along are Ali Mohammad Lone's *Ta Vyath Rozi Pakaan* and *Myaani Jigaruki Daadi Vwoth*, Akhtar Mohi-ud-din's *Aadam Chuu Ajab Zaat*, Shankar Raina's *Vwoný Kahanz Chhi Vaarý*, Som Nath Sadhu's *Zu Rang*, *Jaanaki* and *Riyaazun Mol*, Rattan Lal Shant's *Yeli Pan Rov*, Bansi Nirdosh's *Vaav, Naav ta Daryaav*, Harikrishna Kaul's *Yeli Vatan Chuu Khur Yivaan* and *Naatak Kariv Band*, Rahman Rahi's translation of *Dr Faustus* and Shamas-ud-Din Shamim's *Byagur Baana*. They figure very often in Listeners' requests. Som Nath Zutshi's *Viji Vaav* was awarded the first All India Radio award in 1955.

From the indoor stage, Kashmiri drama moved over to the cinema screen. The first film *Maanziraat* was released in 1968. It was directed by Pran Kishore, featuring Omkar Aima as the hero and Krishna Wali as the heroine, with Som Nath Sadhu, Pushkar Bhan and others as the supporting cast. The second film, *Mahjoor* was released in 1970 and the credit for producing it goes entirely to the great thespian, Balraj Sahni. He himself figured as Mahjoor's father, while his son Parikshit Sahni played the role of Mahjoor the poet. The heroine too was a well-known stage actress. Others in the cast were Pran Kishore, Sajda Begum, Som Nath Sadhu and Pushkar Bhan.

After the Doordarshan Centre, Srinagar was established in 1972, the age of tele-films began for Kashmiri drama. Films *Habba Khaatoon* and *Rasul Mir* were televised, both directed very ably by Basheer Badgami. The former was very popular, with Reeta Razdan as the heroine, Ghani Khan as the hero and Shamima Dev as the background singer. Ghani Khan's performance was very good. He acted equally beautifully in *Rasul Mir*.

Other Kashmiri tele-films followed. Unfortunately

most of them have not been published, and for a proper critical evaluation the printed word is very necessary. The only ones which were published are Ali Mohammad Lone's *Suyya* and Motilal Kemmu's *Lal Bu Draayas Lolare* and *Tshaay*. The first one, *Suyya*, is a historical play with one qualification : it does present the personages and conflicts at a particular time in the past, but the dramatist reshapes the whole action in his mind, so that it doesn't remain confined to that specific time but acquires a larger ambit. He introduces in this play, the *sutradaar* who functions like the Chorus in Greek drama.

Kemmu's *Lal Bu Draayas Lolare*, written for the stage, doesn't show any departure from the conventional form. The simplicity of its technique is however remarkable. His second play, *Tshaay* is, like Lone's *Suyya*, a historical drama, the action supposed to have taken place in the time of Lalitaditya. Like Lone, Kemmu also frees the action and the interplay of forces from the confines of the past, so that the theme — the conflict between faith and doubt — is presented as eternal and universal.

Despite the social upheaval and turmoil that marked the end of the eighth decade, some good plays were written during that period. The Hindi version of one of them, *Baand Duhaayee* was very successfully staged by the National School of Drama in Delhi. These plays have, in addition to the social problems, contemporary tensions of all kinds as the theme. The most significant are Moti Lal Kemmu's *Dakh Yeli Tsalan* (two plays : *Aka Nandun* and *Shah Paathur* published together), *Tota ta Aana* and *Nagar Vwodaasý*, a historical tragedy. Rattan Lal Shant's *Shah Rug* and Radha Krishen Braaroo's *Resh Vaar* were also written during this period.

Dakh Yeli Tsalan is in the form of a *paathur* , but clownage is kept on a low key to make a forceful presentation of the theme possible. The first scene opens with Maagun, the versatile head of the troupe being told about the murder of the actress who was to play the role

of Aka Nandun's mother. Later, when Aka Nandun was to be sacrificed in the play (Abraham - Isaac/Ismail theme), he (the actor) was actually killed by the militants and his dead body was brought to the stage. For Baandabai, who was Maagun's wife, the leading lady of the cast and Aka Nandun's real mother, nothing could have been more ghastly. 'For thirty years', she cries, 'you have shown me your miracles. You have torn Aka Nandun to pieces and brought him back to life. Bring him back to life now ! My only son! Maagun stands paralysed.

Nagar Vwodaasý, a 4-act historical drama based on the 7th *taranga* of *Rajatarangini* has a chorus and a big cast and can thus be staged effectively in the open or on a proscenium stage. This is Kemmu's greatest contribution to the Kashmiri stage.

Kemmu, who is beyond doubt the leading Kashmiri dramatist, has won the J&K Cultural Academy awards for *Teen Asangat Ekaanki* (Hindi, 1968), *Trinov* (1970) and *Lal Bu Draayas Lolare* (1970); *Naatak Truch* (1982) won the Sahitya Akademi award.

Rattan Lal Shant's *Shah Rug* which was published in *Son Adab* (1993) is also based on a *taranga* of *Rajatarangini* like Kemmu's *Nagar Vwodaasý*. Both these, in addition to being historical plays, deftly weave the present situation into the theme. Both thus emphasize that things have not changed in a thousand years. There was a struggle for survival then, and there is the same struggle now. The innocent were murdered then : they are murdered now too. Palatial buildings continue to be razed to the ground.

Braroo's *Reshý Vaar*, published serially in *Kaashur Samachar* is a community drama, but is not a powerful play. Also published during the eighties are Mohammad Subhan Bhagat's *Baanda Jashin* (collected plays), and Harikrishna Kaul's *Naatuk Kariv Bund*.

The Sahitya Akademi publication, *One Act Plays* has ten plays written upto 1993 and selected by Moti Lal Kemmu. These are Ali Mohammad Lone's *Chaarý Paathur*,

Pushkar Bhan's *Rangan Handý Rang*, Sajjud Sailaani's *Raata Kruul*, Hari Krishen Kaul's *Dastaar*, Farooq Masoodi's *Kaalej Paathur*, Nisaar Naseem's *Sarý Pethý*, Ghulam Ali Majboor's *Paathur Chhu Jaaree*, Aziz Hajini's *Mazaar-i-Shahraa*, Rattan Talaashi's *Haalas Chhu Praarun* and Moti Lal Kemmu's *Seena Safaayee*. It appears most of them are radio plays, which makes the rehearsals not so easy on the stage, as far as groupings and gestures are concerned. However, since there is no tradition of one-act plays in Kashmiri, this first collection of plays on various themes may be considered an important publication.

Sajjud Sailani (b. 1938) is playwright, poet and artist, though his basic passion, as he says, is theatre, and he started his career in 1955 as an actor. His *Shehjaar* (collection of poems) won the J&K Academy award in 1970, while his *Shihul Naar* won the Best Playwright award from the Kashmir Theatre Federation in 1974 and from the J&K Academy in 1981. His *Kajý Raath* (Silent Night, 1988), a set of three full-length plays — *Rwopaya Rood* (Shower of money), *Kajý Raath* and *Gaashi Taarukh* (Bright Star) — was well received. The first is about people whose sole ambition in life is to amass wealth by hook or by crook. The second revolves round a family with meagre resources pulling on despite hardships. The third, a tragic play depicting the life of nomadic Arab tribes portrays the magnanimity and generosity of Salmaan, a noble soul who heads a tribe, irrespective of his personal considerations. Sailani has to his credit so far 17 full-length and 12 one-act plays, apart from 9 Radio and TV plays in Urdu. They have been staged at all the theatres — Rang Manch, Sangam, Kala Kendra, Pragaash, Kamal and others in Srinagar and outside. His involvement with the theatre covers stage decor too (for which he was given an award by the Kashmir Theatre Federation).

Sailani's advent into the field of drama came when symbolic and figurative presentation of the theme had already started revolutionising the technique and he

welcomed the change, but took care to prevent obscurity from clouding clarity of communication. He innovated slides for symbolic sets, as in *Kajý Raath* in particular. He makes use of stock characters both from life and legend. They assist meaning and lend significance to a mixed assortment of dramatis personae, such as appear in *Rwopayi Rood*. In *Kajý Raath*, however, the characters are all contemporary Kashmiris. Or in *Gaashi Taarukh*, which depicts the life of nomadic Arabs in an oasis, the characters are all Arabs. Here he has rendered this alien situation remarkably well without introducing unnecessarý changes in the Kashmiri language.

Sailani has been associated with cultural organizations — as President of Bazme Shora and Sangam Theatre, as member of the Advisory Boards, J&K Academy, Kashmir Theatre Federation, Kashmir Cultural Organization (Vice-President) and Hussaini Cultural Trust (Gen Secy).

Translations

Mahmood Gami has the distinction of being the first translator of foreign (Persian) compositions into Kashmiri, as has been mentioned in the section on *masnavis* earlier. He was followed by other *bazmia* and *razmia masnavi* writers of the 19th century. Translations of the *Bible*, the *Quran*, *Euclid* etc., have been mentioned earlier in this chapter.

There has been a spate of translations into Kashmiri of drama written in other languages. The pace has been rather slow, though one could say that it has been picking up of late, mainly because of the demand from Radio Kashmir and Doordarshan, for Kashmiris would prefer the spoken word to the written word. The basic reason for this apathy is the fact that the habit of reading leaves much to be desired, which deficiency is richly aided or abetted by the total absence of Kashmiri from the school curriculum.

The average reader who knows and has been taught Urdu faces the problem of deciphering the Kashmiri diacritical marks which only confuse him and therefore decides to call it a day. The Cultural Academy and the Sahitya Akademi do encourage and subsidize translations which get accommodated in literary journals. This does provide work for the translator and reading material for the tiny minority who know the script. Radio Kashmir and Doordarshan do not suffer from this handicap, because their transmission makes any programme, including short stories and plays available to everybody, literate or illiterate.

Translation from languages other than English, Hindi, Urdu or Persian are generally translations of translations, and thus twice removed from reality, being based on the rendering of the original in English, Hindi or Urdu. That in a way is generally a problem everywhere. It is almost always evident that the translator has not read Gorky, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Cervantes etc., in the original. However, he does deserve credit for introducing a classic to people whose knowledge would otherwise be restricted to the name of the author and the title of the book. But some of the translations have been outstanding, e.g. of Nicolai Gogol's *The Inspector General*, for which Zutshi got the Sovietland Nehru award.

The following Kashmiri translations may be mentioned :

Author	Work	Translator
Henrik Ibsen	The Wild Duck	Som Nath Zutshi
	Ghosts	Akhtar Mohi-ud-din
Goethe	Faust	Ghulam Nabi Firaq
Cervantes	Don Quixote	Shyam Lal Sadhu
Maxim Gorky	Mother	Ali Mohammad Lone
Maxim Gorky	Man is Born	Rahman Rahi
Nicoloi Gogol	The Inspector General	Som Nath Zutshi
Chekov	The Three Sisters	Rattan Lal Shant

Tolstoy	War and Peace	Muzaffar Azim
Franz Kafka	The Trial	Som Nath Zutshi
Aristotle	Poetics	Ghulam Nabi Khayyal
	Arabian Nights	Mohi-ud-din Hajini
Khayyam	Rubaiyat	Ghulam Hasan Beg Arif
Shakespeare	Othello	Ghulam Nabi Khayyal
	(some scenes)	Dina Nath Nadim
	King Lear	Naji Munawar
	Julius Caesar	- do -
Arthur Miller	Death of a Salesman	Mohan Nirash
Goldsmith	She Stoops to Conquer	Autar Krishen Rahbar
Galsworthy	Justice	Akbar Ali Ansari
Keats, Tennyson	Selected Poems	Khizir Magribi and
		Ghulam Nabi Firaq
Kalidas	Malvikagnimitra	Bansi Nirdosh
Sumitra Nandan Pant	Vyor	Prithvi Nath Pushp
Gandhi	My Experiments with Truth	Akhtar Mohi-ud-din
Tagore	The Post Office	Mohammad Amin Kamil
	Raja O Rani	- do -
	Red Oleanders	Noor Mohammad Roshan
	Chandalika	- do -
	Mukut Dhara	Ali Mohammad Lone
	Cycle of Spring	Ghulam Hassan Beg Arif
	Reeta	- do -
	Chitra	Autar Krishen Rahbar
	Gitanjali	Moti Lal Naaz
Rajinder Singh Bedi	Ek Chaadar Maili Si	Rasul Pompur
Gurbachan Singh	Sheikh Baba	Rahman Rahi
Talib	Farid-ud-din	
Guru Gobind Singh	Jappaji Sahib	Fazil Kashmiri
	Baha Ullah ta	Mohammad Amin Kamil
	Asar-i-Jadeed	
Mohammad Abdulla	Hadees-i-Sharif	Margoob Banihali Taaree
Abul Kalaam Azad	Tarjaman al Quran	M A Shaida
James Maurier	Haji Baba of Isphahan	Shamas-ud-din
World Short Stories (1)	Shahkaar	S L Sadhu
World Short Stories (2)		Naji Munawar

The Short Story

Kashmir has always been very rich in folk tales of unknown authorship (*lok kathaa*). They are stories of diverse kinds and are undoubtedly variants of popular tales in India and other countries and have been kept alive by oral tradition, recited by professional story tellers called *kathagarý*. Like the poetry that was written long ago — *vaakh, shrukh, vatsun* and *masnavi* — they have also been handed down the generations the same way. And you find a remarkable variety in the repertoire of these story tellers. There are typical Indian stories like *The Tale of a Parrot* and *The Story of Raja Vikramaditya*, tales of Persian origin like *Yusuf Zuleikha* and *Mahmood of Ghazni* and a medley of other stories — fairy tales like *Wazirmaal* and *Laalmaal*, romantic tales like *Shah Sayaar*, tales of highwaymen and other popular spicy narratives. Sir Aurel Stein, the well-known translator of Kalhana's history of Kashmir, *Rajatarangini*, gave the world the first remarkable collection of such folk stories, *Hatim's Tales* which is a selection of tales narrated to him in 1896 by a professional story teller named Hatim, whom he describes as a "cultivator settled in the little hamlet, Panzil where he owns an oil press." He was unlettered, but his repertoire of stories and songs was a large one and he was "able to recite them all at any desired speed to suit our ears and pens". This book was edited by Sir George Grierson and published in London in 1923. It is in the Roman script. That the text does not deviate even an iota from the style, pauses and the set manner of narration, makes it an invaluable introduction to the institution of professional story telling in Kashmir.

We have seen the beginnings of literary drama in Kashmir. Now about the birth of the short story. Some writers, Nadim, Zutshi, Noor Mohammad Roshan and Aziz Haroon in particular, made a serious attempt to write short stories, and in the March 1950 issue of *Kwong Posh* two short stories appeared, *Jawaabee Kaard* by ***Nadim***

and *Yeli Phol Gaash* (When Dawn Broke) by ***Zutshi***, both from the Progressive Writers' group. With the exception of Amin Kamil and B.B. Kachru, everyone believes that Nadim (who has many firsts to his credit) was the first to write a short story in Kashmiri. When Moti Lal Saqi interviewed him on 19 October 1983, he did ask him about this controversy. Nadim told him that he had written his story in 1948 and it was broadcast the same year from Radio Kashmir while Zutshi wrote his story in February 1949. Another well-known writer of the progressive group, Abdul Aziz Haroon (who is now most of the time in the USA) corroborated this statement in his interview with Chaman Lal Chaman, adding that the first critical essay, written by Prithvi Nath Pushp, was also published in the same issue. But while it is a fact that Pushp takes the cake for being the first to appear as a literary critic, his composition is not to be seen in this issue.

All the short stories that appeared then showed a coherence in the sentence structure. It was also refreshing that the words were chosen from everyday speech, one of the essentials for all progressive writing, and there was an attempt at precision of meaning. Thus Kashmiri prose was forging ahead to become a viable instrument for various forms of expression — narrative, descriptive, expository and emotive — soon after 1950. This was a long-felt need, for there are a thousand things in life which cannot be handled by the language of poetry.

The two stories that were the first to appear in print were followed by more, like Nadim's *Rai* (Blight) and *Sheena Pyato Pyato* (Keep falling, snow), Aziz Haroon's *Zoon* (Moon) and *Bram* (Illusion), Noor Mohammed Roshan's *Neha Gata*, Mirza Arif's *Nare*, Rahman Rahi's *Yeli Su Thana Pyav* and others. However, Nadim soon found that the short story was not his cup of tea, that he had a long way to go before succeeding in this field, and gave it up for good. He certainly had talent but he wasn't the writer to practise this art. All the stories mentioned above belong to the progressive period coinciding with

the raid on Kashmir by Pakistan. Naturally, they have very strong common characteristics. All of them, including Nadim's three stories, are blatant propaganda — which is not unnatural or unexpected — for all progressive art is propagandist art. But Nadim's *Jawaabee Kaard* fizzles out at the end. Now one cannot forget that there are propagandist stories where the essential tenets of the art of story writing — plot construction, character delineation, complication and denouement — have not been ignored. For example, Maxim Gorky and the great Russian writers who inspired all progressive writers in India. As Nadim himself put it, "An artist can certainly lend his skill to help propagate a cause, whatever the cause may be, but if the slogans are not accompanied by a true artistic talent, then only slogans will remain." Now this is true about his own stories, and those of his progressive contemporaries. Remove the factor of propaganda and Nadim's stories collapse, which doesn't happen in the case of his poems written during the same period and as propagandist as anything in the world, because they are poetry in addition to being tendentious writing. He and his friends had studied and were inspired by the Urdu progressive writers. Since the aim of writing a short story was not related to its artistic perfection, the various essentials of a short story did not matter at all. The following are the common defects noticed :

1. There is no proper character delineation. In fact there is nothing to delineate, since the characters are cast in specific moulds and incapable of growing at all. Instead of having individual traits, they belong to two distinct groups — very good and very bad. Peasants and workers are in the first group; *jagirdars* and capitalists in the second. There is no in-between character displaying a juxtaposition of different and divergent traits as in real life.
2. There is no realistic background, no real situations. There is no denouement. The ending of the story is fixed and determines the movement of the story, i.e.,

the whole plot moves to a stipulated end in a manner that leaves much to be desired.

3. There is excessive exaggeration, which is not at all called for even for propaganda, like an illiterate peasant suddenly flowering as a great orator and mouthing philosophical platitudes.

However, it would be most unfair to call it a waste of effort. On the contrary, Nadim and the other pioneers — Zutshi, Roshan, Haroon — blazed a new trail which attracted new talent. Since the progressive creed as a compulsion was almost dead, the new entrants — who incidentally were not bound by this brand of commitment — started discovering the potentialities of serious writing in a language they had known only as a vehicle of conversation. There were at this stage not more than 12 writers in the field of the short story, most of whom had written earlier in Hindi or Urdu before switching over to Kashmiri, as most poets from Zinda Kaul to Rahman Rahi had done. This 'apprenticeship' certainly led to importing new themes and new styles they had known during this period, and many would therefore label their art derivative. However, the short story that developed in Kashmir, despite a few temporary foreign plumes, was firmly rooted in the soil. Prose was now being used for the first time for creating characters from various strata of Kashmiri society, both Hindu and Muslim. The task these new writers faced was thus a challenging task. They had to search for new words and phrases to clothe new thoughts and feelings in, to use old words and native colloquial idioms and new contexts and connotations, incisiveness and dialogue, taut and sequacious sentence construction. To put it briefly, what an author needed vitally was

1. sensitivity to character and situations,
2. skill to choose appropriately from linguistic sources,
3. experiment with a language which had never been used for short story writing.

Zutshi's collected short stories were published recently covering 45 years of authorship. It is refreshing

as the stories here are very different from his first story written in the progressive literature days. After that a new period started, showing a greater maturity, with characters not tailor-made. In *Aki Raats Hond Mehmaan* written after the 1990 disaster, he makes use of an old fable where an individual is split into two separate parts, one on this side of the mountain becoming a unicorn and the other on the other side trying to cross over. *Yim Kam Daryodhan* is a picture of darkness suddenly descending at noon, blotting out all the lights of heaven, and *Chhoot Chhatak Chhatak* shows passengers' trepidation on hearing the whistle and sound of the railway engine as they are strangers to it. Will it take them across or leave their skeletons on the mountain top?

These short stories are really short. The language is simple and sweet and all figures of speech are drawn from the everyday life of the common people.

The first period of Kashmiri short story came to an end in 1955, with the most prominent among the newcomers, *Akhtar Mohi-ud-din* (1928-2001) blazing a new trail, for in his short stories you find for the first time a realistic portrayal of characters and situations and deftly woven plots, unlike what the unreal world of the progressives had presented. There is freshness of theme and style and a marked sensibility. His diction is remarkably fresh and there are unforgettable characters. One also finds a vein of satire, as in *Dariyaayi hond Yezaar* (Shalwar of silk). This and *Dand Vazun* remain unequalled so far, even by Akhtar himself. One doesn't find the pre-determined plot in any of his stories, in which the accent is rather on revealing the mental processes at work in the psyche of very ordinary individuals. His first collection of seven stories, *Sath Sangar* (Seven hill tops) was published in 1955 and won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1958. These are stories of atmosphere, of memorable situations, of character delineation and delving into the working of a person's mind. Akhtar has an eye for humour

and irony in unexpected situations and an appropriate style and diction for each character. The same characteristics are observed in his second collection, *Sonzal* (Rainbow). His stories, it must be pointed out, have no links with the progressive movement.

Rahman Rahi and *Mohammad Amin Kamil* started writing short stories during the period of progressive writing. Rahi has to his credit only *Yeli Su Thana Pyav* (When he was born). Kamil persisted and succeeded in establishing himself as an acknowledged writer when he published his *Kathi Manz Kath* (A tale within a tale), a collection of ten stories, which revealed a penetrating eye for complicated human emotions and the skill in realistic portrayal. His range of plots is wide as the titles will show — *Kokar Jung* (Cock fight) — *Jahnami* (Reprobate) — a satire on the rulers of the day — *Nov Taavan* (New Plague) — depicting moral laxity — *Pot Kal* (Anxiety), *Aana* (Mirror), *Aabisar ta Kanyipal* (The Lake and the Boulder). His speciality is presenting the mental conflict of an individual by putting him in the appropriate atmosphere to generate the conflict. His best story is *Azam Bab*, which he wrote later. Kamil's stories have a subtle humour and occasionally a deft satirical touch which makes them serious compositions.

Sufi Ghulam Mohammad (b 1927) published two collections, *Sheesha ta Sangistaan* (Glass and Rock) and *Loosýmutý Taarakh* (The stars that set). He places characters above plot, but they are more types than individuals. He is more attentive to their outward form than to their inner life, their conflicts. He however makes a mark in handling prose well in his stories.

Bansi Lal Nirdosh (b 1928), whose stories had already appeared in various papers and journals, published three collections in quick succession after 1958 — *Baal Maraayo, Insaan Chhu Yithai Badnaam* and *Girdaab*. His method is to dwell at length on what appear to be trivial issues and episodes which, however, build up an unforeseen and surprising climax, as for example in the

memorable story, *Tulur*. In *Khotsun* he creates an atmosphere of horror, but in *Baraat*, a sense of overpowering fate is stronger than the element of horror. His *Kaansi mo Raavin Shoore Paan* is another significant story in which Nirdosh introduces new perspectives.

Shankar Raina (b 1930) made his debut with *Zitni Zool* (Fire flies). This and *Hochhmuts Thar* (The Withered Creeper) are hospital stories, written with a doctor's sensibility and observant eye. He weaves in all his stories an atmosphere of great helplessness, with each patient shown in the 'ultimate' transit camp. His most poignant story is *Vwoný Kahanz Chhi Vaarý* (Whose Turn Next?). But more significant is the story, *Lwokchi Lwokchi Katha* (Minor Episodes), in which he shows that what you would dismiss as trivial matters constitute the very fabric of life. As in Nirdosh, it is these episodes that lead to an unexpected climax. Unfornunately this doctor, so full of promise of a higher stature as an author died young, as if in answer to the question, 'Whose turn next?'.

Autar Krishen Rahbar (b 1932) published his first collection of nine stories, *Tobruk* in 1938, and easily made a mark as the master of effective dialogue, in the sense that action in his stories moves forward mainly through dialogue, narration playing not so important a role. He wrote more than 15 stories till the mid-seventies, adding more delicacy of touch to his distinctive style. His second collection, *Mwokhta Lar* is a set of stories for children. *Tobruk* is beyond doubt a milestone in the history of Kashmiri fiction. Reviewing this publication, J.L. Kaul observes that "obsessive flash-back technique, unsuited ornate diction, excessive exclamation marks and dots and, above all, their pointlessness are all marked out as a miniature exercise in story telling. It is stories like *Aasha, Zu Tasveer Akh Prats* and short radio plays which he wrote later that show promise" (*Studies in Kashmiri*).

In *Deepak Kaul's* (b 1932) collection, *Shaamuran*, which includes *Kun Musaafir* and *Tshaamph*, the distinctive characteristic one finds in all the stories is

the use of reminiscence and flashback. Umesh Kaul's (b 1932) first story, *Adui Kath* appeared in *Kwong Posh* in 1955, and was followed by *Baazar* and *Dil.* Both these (Deepak and Umesh) as well as other new comers were struggling to find their feet in a literary field that had not yet established a solid base, a solid tradition. Other stories that also strike new directions are Ghulam Rasool Santosh's *Doora Joorý*, and *Dod ta Dag*, Taj Begum Renzoo's *Aalav Astaan Dedi Tal* and Hriday Kaul Bharati's *Teh* and *Shikast.*

A new phase started in 1959. Kashmiri short story started acquiring a cognizable identity after the laudable experiments made by the authors 1955 onwards, though all great masters of the art of fiction have emphatically laid down 50 years as the minimum period of gestation for any branch of literature. Certain significant developments were noticeable in the five-year period of transition (1955-59). Though the narrative element continued as the basic essential, the sanctity of plot structure and time sequence ceased to be inviolable to a large extent. Since life itself does not display any logical sequence and systematic design of events as in a conventional story but is on the contrary an assemblage of small and big episodes occurring without any laid down order, a short story, which is after all a mirror image of life, would betray the same traits. A character cannot be understood by his external appearance alone or by the trappings of clothes he wears. To understand him, we have to seek an entry into his psyche, his subconscious self. Modern writers are different from their predecessors because of the influence of the epoch-making discovery of the subconscious mind by Sigmund Freud. This was very evident in what we have called the time of transition (55-59). The artist, whether he is Akhtar or Lone, concentrates on the job of discovering the real identity of the characters.

The new writers who swam into the field, apart from Akhtar Mohi-ud-din who was already there, were Ali

Mohammad Lone, Ghulam Rasool Santosh (the painter-poet), Autar Krishen Rahbar, Dr Shankar Raina, Hriday Kaul Bharati, Harikrishna Kaul and Rattan Lal Shant.

The first writer to introduce the new trend was of course Akhtar Mohi-ud-din when he wrote the two stories, *Gahe Taaph Gahe Shihul* and *Rotul*. One sees the change in the time sequence and the juxtaposition of the past, present and future. He shows that the causes and consequences of an action are not external factors but stem from within the character. In *Rotul* he employs the technique of rumination, putting temporal time to sleep and invoking scenes from different points of time and space and making them flow as different eddies into one another and not look like consciously devised parts of the main story. His language is the normal language of speech, neither refined nor crude.

Most of the stories of ***Hriday Kaul Bharati*** (b. 1937) — *Teh, Shikast, Aabnoosuk Rolar, Hamzaad, Vakhta kis Chokhatas Manz* — have been widely appreciated. They centre round modern man's lack of faith, helplessness, confusion and hopelessness which is brought out allegorically, and even the language is figurative. For example, in *Hamzaad,* a pigeon is shown trying to enter a closed, dark room by breaking the window panes. The scene shifts to the bus stand where the lone character in the story is waiting for a bus. Soon a swarm of people are seen hurrying across the road and he also joins them. The decay of identity in our time is the basic characteristic of some of his stories. In one of them a person sees people chattering like monkeys and having a thick hairy skin like them. This he observes objectively so long as he has a distinct separate identity. But soon he submits to an operation (which symbolically stands for a mental metamorphosis), as a consequence of which he finds himself no distinct from the others. He has developed a thick hirsute skin and chatters like the monkeys. The story shows man having reverted to his primordial stage. *Shikast* is about a young man who, unable to get from

life what he desired, turned an unrepentant cynic and, in his death, had his revenge on life.

Some writers who emerged now were already there in the transitional period (1955-59). ***Ali Mohammad Lone*** (b. 1927) who wrote three dozen stories only after 1960 had established himself already as an Urdu short story writer, which experience helped him a lot when he switched over to the Kashmiri medium and got associated with drama too, writing radio plays and TV features, as is mentioned elsewhere. Like Akhtar, he also introduced the stream of consciousness technique with remarkable effect. His story, *Shuný* (The void) is an example of this type. You find a percipient individual, the only character in the story; engaged in a monologue. There is no plot and character building as such. The consciousness of an all-pervading void floods this person's mind and leads him up one hill and down another. This consciousness of the inner void fills all his stories. It is a consequence, he says, of the disappearance of faith in the modern age. *Aadam, Ablees ta Hawaa* and *Masval ta Madanvaar* are two other stories of this type.

Harikrishna Kaul (b 1934) published his first collection, *Pata Laaraan Parbath* in 1972. This was a veritable landmark. His first story, *Taaph* (Sunshine), with which he made a mark and which still continues to be highly praised, was published much earlier in *Sheeraaza* in 1967. The cardinal aspect of Harikrishna's stories is realism, but, as in Kafka, almost the entire action takes place in the mind of the individual, so that the other characters are entirely ignorant of this psychological drama, just as they are innocent of being the cause of the development. For example, *Taaph* is about a woman whom her son takes to Delhi to escape the rigours of the Kashmiri winter. The story is just about how this lady finds it impossible to adapt herself to a new place, a new environment, a new life and new people and decides to return. And no one understands why she wants to do so. Harikrishan does not discard the old ingredients like plot

structure and character depiction, but he is unique in making use of the unembellished language of speech which aids the narrative to move forward smoothly and does not at any time appear as having been designed for an effect. His prominent stories in this first collection are *Taaph, Vaaraag, Curfew, Dharma Katha, Shamshaan Vaaraag* and *Pagaah*. He was soon recognized as a prominent author with, as Rahman Rahi put it, 'a multi-dimentional creative ability'.

His second collection, *Haalas Chhu Rotul* was to have been published in 1974, and thereby hangs a tale. One of the stories in it, *Kath Chhi Zevi Hanz, Sawaal Chhu Thooluk* mentions a whole mansion being polished inside — floor, walls, ceiling et al - with millions of eggs. It was suspected in official circles that the story was based on a true life scandal and there was pressure on the author to withdraw the short story. Kaul refused to do so and published the book at his own expense 11 years later.

Rattan Lal Shant (b 1938), another prominent writer of the present age, sailed into the field of Kashmiri fiction after 1960, and soon brought out his compilation, *Achharwalan Pyath Akh Koh*, which includes his best story, *Thor*. His *Cycle* was published in 1985. He is also a dramatist, and dozens of his plays have been broadcast from All India Radio and Doordarshan. Besides being a prominent poet, he is a journalist and critic. He is a recipient of the President's gold medal (1957), the J&K Academy award (1966) and the Sovietland Nehru award for translating Anton Chekov's *Three Sisters* into Kashmiri. He is at present the President of 'Samprati', Jammu and is on the Kashmiri Adivsory Board of the Sahitya Akademi.

Amin Kamil, Bansi Nirdosh, Ghulam Nabi Baba and others have also continued writing stories, retaining their individual characteristics. Abbaas Taabash (b 1935) has written only a few stories. S.L. Sadhu's *Kasaas* was published in 1970. Ghulam Nabi Shakir (b 1938) writes off and on. His stories *Maslan Bu, Awal-i-Sontukў Posh*

and *Gata ta Tresh* reflect the confusion that has assailed the modern mind.

The new arrivals in the field experimented with new stylistic techniques and thus brought a remarkable freshness and originality into the art. The prominent among them are Farooq Masoodi (b 1947), Bashir Akhtar (b 1944), Gulshan Majeed (b 1949), Shamas-ud-din Shameem (b 1949), Abida Ahmad, Ghulam Mohammad Zahid, Sham Lal Sadhu, Autar Krishen Razdan and Rattan Lal Jauhar.

Though lavishly praised by some and condemned by others, *Farooq's* stories created a stir because, discarding all conventional claptrap he presented his characters in their essential nudity, emphasizing the fact that since every person is irretrievably enmeshed in various circumstances, he is basically governed by animal instincts. To present this effectively calls for a definite artistic skill, which is noticeable in his *Nosh-e-lab, Shina Padmaaný, Sheen* and other stories. He penetrates into each psyche to unveil the hidden aspects of a character's personality.

Bashir Akhtar, also a poet, wrote his first story, *Yaarabal* when he was student editor of *Pratap*. He insists that all works of art must have a purpose. But though he claims to be writing for the people and not for the elite, his stories don't seem to be for the common man, nor does one discover any purpose, social or otherwise in them. The quality that they most indubitably have is that they make interesting reading. Various problems — social, religious, political — do figure in the fabric of his stories just as they could anywhere in life, but there is no discussion on them anywhere nor any solution pointed out. However, the narrative is gripping from the beginning to the end. His best stories are *Filmee Trailer, Kohi Kaafuký Jinn* and *Myon Adalyok Safarnaama.*

Gulshan Majeed shifted his sights from the mundane to the mental sphere, the seat of various problems — individual, social, human — which beset man's life more

than any other problems. In his story, *Su* (He), an old stranger arrives in a village, looking for new lamps in exchange for old ones and being unsuccessful, goes back the way he had come.

Gulshan's aim is to make the modern short story have the attributes of a modern poem — brevity and depth of meaning. His story, *Me Maa Zaanakh* projects men as mirrors with the reflecting surface gone, and through a prism only the component parts of light can be seen and not its totality. His figurative use of language facilitates rather than obstructs communication. He doesn't lay bare the entire meaning right in the beginning. He only presents the atmosphere. The opening lines of his stories, as in folk tales, compel the reader to go through the whole story with pleasure.

Shamas-ud-din Shameem has not published much, but what he has written gives great promise of his developing into a fine artist. His *Vachhas Tal Mazaar* is widely appreciated.

The other young men who have started in this field are Ghulam Hasan Taskeen, Rattan Lal Mujjoo, Iqbal Faheem, Manzoor Khaaki, Chaman Lal Hakku, Braj Premi and Anis Hamadani . All of them show that tomorrow will be bright for the Kashmiri short story. The only collection published so far is Ghulam Hasan Taskeen's *Vaarýdaath*.

The Last Phase

A qualitative change in thought was noticeable with the coming of the 7th decade. The short story did not 'vegetate' but, as Kamil says, moved forward with new talent arriving. One finds a new approach and an analysis of maladjusted individuals. To present their mental conflict effectively, figurative rendering is taken recourse to. Farooq Masoodi's *Syathaa Maamoolee*, and Rattan Lal Shant's *Tshaayi Gitý* are good representatives of this period.

There is also the rise of a new genre — a short story

which is really short, with only one character talking to the reader. The stream-of-consciousness technique concentrates on the rambling thoughts and reminiscences tossing up and down his mind. Among the first in this category is Autar Krishen Rahbar's *Rahith Gaamtsu Achhý Zu* (1972). It is the monologue of a cancer patient in a hospital ward. This person is the victim of a bad accident in which he lost both his legs. His eyes, however, were spared. He is shown spending a sleepless night, reminiscing his past and haunted by the apparition of two fixed, unblinking eyes floating in through the window. His other story, *Bund Daar* (Closed Window) is also a monologue, the narrator again a victim of agonising insomnia.

Tsui Chhukh Tsui Chhukh, (You are He), written by Akhtar Mohi-ud-din is also a monologue and, like Rahbar's new stories, quite short, with a certain difference, that the focal point is not the character's personal agony but embraces a universal experience which seems to be eternal, that man has all along been the victim of the exalted ego, and has in fact loved this delusion of being omnipotent, as for example Namrood, Haranakashyap et al. The narrator identifies himself with all the victims of this delusion.

From *Gahe Taaph Gahe Shihul* his technique is some what different. His earlier stories *Daryaayi Hond Yezaar, Dand Vazun, Daah Numberee* and *Me Tog Na Kenh* were looked up to as models. Now unusual situations are presented, as in *Praalab, Chhaa Kaansi Saamrath* and *Irtikaa.* The narrative, however, is not disturbed, and the stories retain their charm. The accent shifts radically from the external reality to the mechanism of the psyche. The last line of *Gahe Taaph Gahe Shihul,* when the narrator gets up and walks out of the Coffee House and takes the road shows that he is as solitary now as he was in the Coffee House. This emphasizes the essential loneliness of the human soul. In *Al Nafsee* the male character has to bear his loneliness alone, as his wife is engrossed in

snoring. In *Tsas*, a chick lifted by a kite falls down and is lifted by a dog who is chased by a man. Ultimately, the chick is back in the pen. The veterinarian tries to save him to fatten him for the eventual knife, but he dies. In *Irtikaa*, the sufferer is a plant, afraid he might be eaten up by a blade of grass. His recent stories, besides being really short and having a somewhat enigmatic touch so that they are more like riddles, do try the reader's power of interpretation. An example : *Myon Afsaana* or *Matý Kath*. In the latter there is the speaking mirror offering advice. To make this unnatural object acceptable, he prepares the reader's psyche by throwing broad hints that it is not an ordinary mirror, somewhat like how Coleridge prepares you to accept Kubla Khan with the mention of Xanadu, Alph the sacred river, sunless sea, etc. It makes "willing suspension of disbelief" possible.

In his last phase, Akhtar Mohi-ud-din again takes the cake with his *Vaanji Manz Puj* (The Butcher in the Heart). A shepherd gives the happy news about a new arrival in his family, but the sheep is utterly distraught, convinced that a butcher has been born in his own heart, and bounds in terror over hill and dale. Akhtar is making use of a parable and, since this birth is not ostensibly connected with any development in the story — in fact there is no story at all — he is possibly really underlining through this figurative expression an eternal truth, that fear, a disastrous faculty, always germinates in our own heart.

His other story, *Jali Handý Danda Phalý* is different, as he focuses his sights on militancy and the aftermath, how a policeman allows an old man to cross the road during curfew hours and his relief not allowing him to cross back. He is beaten up badly. The story evidently is written to highlight police excesses.

Harikrishna Kaul does not jettison the traditional technique, for a mere change of technique does not necessarily ensure improvement of presentation. Delving into the subconscious self of the characters, he presents

a situation. For example, in *Yath Raazdaane*, he presents an identity crisis : how a Kashmiri Pandit, who migrated to Delhi, was completely bewildered in the huge metropolis with its myriad streets and buses. His other story, *Haal* (Acclimatization) has a similar theme, a person taking his mother to a place where the sun showers fire on a parched soil. "You will get used to it", says the scorching sun on the way, "I am not the same here that I was there".

His latest, *Zool Apaaryum* (Distant Lights), being published soon, is remarkable in many ways. Most contemporary writers generally focus on the decade old shattered social fabric, with the attendant factors of an identity crisis owing to migration to an inhospitable climate (Jammu, Delhi etc), the miseries of exile and inability to adjust to a radically new and hostile social environment. We do get glimpses of this trauma in his stories written earlier, like *Taaph* (Sunshine) and *Yath Raazdane* (This metropolis), etc. But in *Zool Apaaryum*, we meet an ageing couple exiled in their own new house in the desolate outskirts of Srinagar, built when their son laid it down as a precondition for visiting them, for he would never come to their dilapidated downtown house. But he never came again, choosing to live across the seven seas in Canada, while the parents live in awful loneliness, with all purpose of life draining away. The husband, however, has a persistent illusion of incredible distant illumination far across the river on the hill slope behind the Badami Bagh Cantonment.

The meaningful suggestions that you find in this story are also there in Autar Krishen Rahbar's *Tshaay* (Shadow). The character who has left hearth and home is now a tenant in a small flat and is ordered by the landlord to quit immediately. He is shown talking to his own shadow and events that have happened in the past float down memory lane.

Rattan Lal Jauhar follows in his wake with his *Aash ta Vishwaas* and *Soncha Sahrav*, and Mahfuza Jaan with *Tsala Laar* and *Tamanna*. One might also mention her *Tsala Laar* and *Tamanna*.

here Iqbal Faheem's *Shuný*, Rattan Lal Shant's *Thor*, Hriday Kaul Bharati's *Pandaraayi Hond Intezaar*, Chaman Lal Hakku's *Jung* and Farooq Masoodi's *Narga Nad*. These are commendable for objective presentation of the present environment. There is also Arjan Dev Majboor's *Haaras ti Korun Vanda* about an elderly lady, Poshi Kuj, whose mind gets deranged as a consequence of her inability to adjust herself to the new place with an absolutely different climate. Also Amar Malmohi's *Lagna Cheery*, with the landlord asking his tenant to vacate the house for driving a nail into the wall to hang a picture, right when a marriage was being celebrated.

Figurative expression to make communication more forceful (not just to keep pace with the Joneses) is used in a remarkable way in Hriday Kaul Bharati's *Shaata Hoon*. It is an excellent example of letting the symbol reveal itself while the author is concentrating on his most important job of narrating the story.

Nazir Jahangir's *Musla* (Skins) is a *daastaan* where the king finds human skins unsuitable material for curtains, as they stink. There is a touch of satire and above all an inbuilt tension in the story itself which saves it from mediocrity.

Abdul Ahad Wahid's *Pachi Phyur* is another attempt at figurative expression — how a man sees a different image of himself in the mirror. Where does the defect lie, he wonders — in his own eyes or in the mirror? The mirror is not a new symbol, but what is sought to be put across is not clear. His other story written during this period (1989) is *Shihil Tyongul*.

The same deficiency is evident in Nasir Mansoor's *Kruhni Achhý Vaajaný* (The dark-eyed woman). Taking a semi-legendary story, he doesn't invest the well-known technique with a new meaning. It doesn't have any message, though it does link the theme of the story with the present social scene. The incurable vice of tendentious writing is a preconceived plot in all its totality, which obliges the writer to drag the story to its pre-destined

end, and the fault becomes evident, as we have seen in the first stories attempted during the period of progressive literature. This can be seen in Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq's *Yath Vaava Haali*, *Metsi Hanz Maay* and *Raavan Tyol*, Autar Krishen Razdan's *Daah Lachh Rwopayi*. To some extent, it is observable in Akhtar Mohi-ud-din's *Jali Handý Danda Phalý* too, where the motive is to expose the police excesses.

One might also mention here Amin Kamil's *Laanj* and *Phaatak*, Hriday Kaul Bharati's *Dwon Aanan Darmiyaan*, Autar Krishen Rahbar's *Shrithyomut Siryi*, Bashir Akhtar's *Tichur* and *Meela Pat* written during this period.

The other short stories that appeared at that time, were Gulshan Majid's *Yi ti Akh Kathaa*, Rattan Lal Shant's *Khai*, Bansi Nirdosh's *Firaaq*, Amar Malmohi's *Taapa Tats*, Rattan Lal Shant's *Cycle*, Mohammad Zaman Azurdah's *Vaharvaar*, Fahmida Jahan's *Bus Akh Tamanna*, Autar Krishan Rahbar's *Yeli Parda Voth* and Ali Mohammad's *Sharma daarený*.

The new talent who give evidence of being definitely promising are Sohan Lal Kaul (*Vaaraan Bu*), Ghulam Nabi Haleem (*Zabarwan*), Mushtaq Mahroom (*Brake*) and Rashid Raashid (*Yi Kitsh Raath*).

The Novel

The Kashmiri novel is inching forward, though not as fast as it does elsewhere in half a century. The prime reason is colossal indifference. Tragic, but true. A multilingual reader's preference is not bound to be restricted to native literature, when well-established literary traditions of Urdu, Hindi, English etc are easily available. Thus the Kashmiri writer has to depend on subsidies from government and private organizations. This has serious implications for the novel in particular. Local journals do not encourage serialised publication. They prefer short stories. Publishers are not interested since there is no

market, and readers are unfortunately indifferent. Thus it is not surprising that there are no more than a dozen novels.

Akhtar Mohi-ud-din's Dod Dag (published in 1958) has the distinction of being the first Kashmiri novel. One might mention two authors who had attempted writing novels before him. One was Prof S.K. Toshkhani whose novel *Leelaa* began appearing in 1922 in a serial form (in the Devanagari script) in *Bahaar-i-Gulshan Kashmir* of Lahore, in which Toshkhani himself was editor of the Kashmiri section. His missionary zeal in organizing women's education in Kashmir is well-known and *Leelaa* was written to advocate this cause. While it was a commendable experiment, it had a basic flaw as a novel. The characters do not grow, being tailor-made like those of the first short stories of the progressive writing era. In addition, the novel remained incomplete. So did the second novel, *Zaath Butaraath* written by Habib Kamraan in 1950. It was not published.

Now *Dod Dag* and the two earlier abortive attempts mentioned above did not spring from virgin soil, in the sense that there was already a tradition of longer narratives for more than a hundred years before modern fiction flowered after 1950. The *masnavis* fulfilled most of the requirements a novel is supposed to have — a chain of events, a large number of characters and the interplay of forces. A short story can do with the minimum of these ingredients, but not so a novel. However, the poetic medium, particularly the ornate diction used in the *masnavis* is unsuitable for novels, which must have prose, the language of conversation, colloquial prose, for adequate effect. The author must be able to project the complexities of human situations and the interaction of various characters, whether his main theme is historical, political, social or emotional.

Dod Dag is the story of two orphaned sisters, Faata and Raaja, the younger one being loving, generous, lively, vivacious, positive, impressive, quick to repent and,

despite her moral lapse (surrendering her body to Akhtar), most suitable as the heroine of the novel, first, because her qualities are related to the compact plot, and second, because it is she who brings misery on herself and her sister. The novel presents an uninhibited, realistic portrayal of the society — human relationships, marriage, divorce, adultery, etc. The author has a grip on the characters who reveal themselves as the situation develops. The descriptive passages, like the one on the Shikara ride, are intimately connected with the story. Shafi Shauq points out that the novel 'fails to convey a cultural message', though one may not agree with this view, as Akhtar does not declare himself a custodian of morals and ethics. However, the scene of divorce does not carry emotional conviction. One also misses the effective touches of humour and satire that we find in his short stories.

Mohammad Amin Kamil's Gati Manza Gaash is the story of Faatima, a teacher in Baramulla who falls in love with a Khwoja boy. She was aghast when she found him in league with the raiders during the tribal invasion of Kashmir from Pakistan in 1947, for he came from a family which had played a leading part in the freedom movement in Kashmir launched by Sheikh Abdullah. To emphasize her secularism, she gave shelter to Ram Krishan.

It is more an elongated short story than a novel, as it falls short of its basic attributes. There is no skilfully woven plot, vivid characterization or intimate relationship between the characters.

In *Ali Mohammad Lone's Asý ti Chhi Insaan*, the background is the Amarnath pilgrimage. Lateef, the central character who narrates the story — really the author himself — tries his best to understand the psyche and the problems of the *yatris* as well as of those who help them forward in the journey to make the pilgrimage possible. In addition to his conversing with them, he also thinks aloud, talking to himself. Thus being subjective, he seems to be spread over the whole story. There is of

course no plot, no characterization. There are long statements, mostly in poetic prose. The only thing that lends life to the story is the dialogue of the pilgrims and others on the way. *Asý ti Chi Insaan* is rather a travelogue than a novel.

The three novels mentioned above were pioneering efforts in a new field and were bound to be found wanting in mastery of the craft of fiction. In 1972, ***Ghulam Nabi Gauhar*** tried his hand at this art and produced *Mujrim* and *Myul*, both love stories. The language, as always in Gauhar, is poetic prose. Though the plot has been woven skilfully, the characters do not develop. Both of them read like interesting court cases. No attention has been paid to human relations.

One gets the overall impression that Gauhar presents the inadequacy of the courts for dispensing justice. His third novel, *Pun ta Paap* (1986) won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1988 for being "an outstanding contribution to Kashmiri literature with its thematic appeal and beauty of expression." It was the first Kashmiri novel to be broadcast in weekly instalments. Getting these instalments ready in a hurry may, as the author admits, give rise to some weaknesses. Vivisection of a novel into instalments before its publication does lead to weakening of its composite structure, and the dialogue may be radio-oriented. Still the theme and the expression stand out, and some of the narrative passages stand in glory. The descriptions of the characters are warm, charming vignettes. In spite of their occasional prolixity, they are the genuine article. *Pun ta Paap* is a pastoral novel, and introduces the reader to rural Kashmir, to the beauty of meadow and mountain and the people who inhabit them. The narrative is pretty straightforward and moves on predictable lines. Gauhar has a grip on his characters, though they may not have angularities of speech. His next novel *Be Naav* (Nameless) has also already appeared serially in *Sheeraaza*.

The next fruit to ripen on the tree of fiction was ***Pran***

Kishore's Sheen ta Vata Pod (Snow and the Footpath), which won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1989.The story was conceived when Pran Kishore met an impressive-looking and warm-hearted Gujjar, Raj Vali Khan, first when he was proceeding from Thana Mandi to Poonch to record documentaries for Radio Kashmir, and six months later near Chochaagali on his way to Tulel, where he extended the same warm greetings and hospitality. The author was drawn to him and besides recording him at both these places, decided to make him the central character of the novel he contemplated. Balraj Sahni was also thrilled and asked Pran Kishore to start work on a film script also, as the story of these people living on mountain slopes would make a powerful film. But the death of the thespian put a lid on that project.

The story is a faithful depiction of the Gujjar people living on a razor's edge, with nature sometimes unleashing its fury and wiping them out of existence. They make footpaths which link people and places, but can be a death-bed too with an avalanche hurtling down. That is how Raj Vali Khan first lost his son, Qumroo and finally his wife, Reshma.

This was the second novel broadcast in instalments from Radio Kashmir. In a way, one can say that it is Autar Krishen Rahbar and Radio Kashmir that prevented two novelists — Gauhar and Pran Kishore — from being left to the mercies of the publishers, and introduced them to the public.

Pran Kishore's second novel, *Mwokhtasar*, is again about the hardy life of the Gujjars , their struggle against elemental forces, their genuine friendships and their acceptance of destiny.

In addition to his admirable work in Kashmiri fiction and drama, Pran Kishore has acquired an enviable stature in these two fields in Urdu also. His *Gul Gulshan Gulfaam* and *Janoon*, serialized on Doordarshan, are a well deserved compliment to this artist.

In 1975, *Bansi Nirdosh* wrote *Akh Doh*, which also

like his short stories has strong links with the now-defunct progressive art movement, for he did not quite recant his faith in this creed. In this novel you find social awareness and human friendship, and the language is remarkably simple. Being emotionally associated with the vicissitudes of his characters, he is not objective. You find moments of pain and misery drawn out with a definite purpose.

In 1976, *Amar Malmohi* wrote his first novel in Kashmiri, *Tresh ta Tarpan*. Earlier he wrote in Urdu. It is the story of a melancholic individual, Ravindra, whose love for Usha is a great source of mental strength. He tries his best to free himself from the circumstances he is hemmed in, but an unforeseen complication sets in with his being married to Vinita, who is Usha's sister. It is only Ravindra's death that solves all problems. The author pays more attention to explain the circumstances, but leaves the important aspect of character delineation alone.

These seven first novels are most definitely a commendable experiment in a new field, and the sincerity of effort of the authors is indeed praiseworthy.

Children's Literature

The most undeveloped genre is children's literature. Perhaps naturally. Because there is no child in Kashmir who can read anything written in Kashmiri. So what is supposed to be for him has to be read out to him, that is presuming that his parents are literate (as far as their mother tongue is concerned). It is this factor of illiteracy of the child combined with the tragic factor of ignorance of the paramount importance of excellent printing and illustration betrayed by authors and publishers that is responsible for this sorry state of affairs. This large area was lying forgotten for a long time, the area specially meant for children, providing folk tales, folk songs, proverbs, nonsense rhymes and everything related to children's games.

The awareness of the need was there and the major

poets indicated so in their own way, for example Mahjoor spelled it out in a poem, so did Nadim first in his article. *Son Asun ta Gindun* (Our fun and frolic) and later in his opera for children, *Neki ta Badi* (Good and Evil). Also Azad, Nandlal Ambardar, Fazil Kashmiri, Abdul Majid Shaayir and Ghulam Rasool Mushtaq were inspired to contribute lovely songs for children. But what they wrote was not essentially written for children, but about them. Then came what might be called a positive step. The Education Department announced that prizes would be awarded every year for books written for children. This encouraged authors to venture forth on the right track, and one gradually saw children's literature coming to life.

S.L. Sadhu came out with his translation of *Don Quixote* and followed it up with his *Votshaprang* (The Magic Carpet). Autar Krishen Rahbar and Naji Munawar came out with their *Mwokhta Lar* (A String of Pearls), which had stories to suit children's taste. Unfortunately this book was a flop despite being well-written, because it was forgotten, as I have pointed out above, that children's books deserve excellent printing and illustration. This made Fazil Kashmiri experiment with a collection of poems *Shama-e-Vatan*. The poems are good and in simple language, but err in being didactic, which a children's book should never be. The book however was printed well. Another book that followed was Shambu Nath Bhat Haleem's *Baala Yaar*, a collection of six interesting stories, all written in easy language, well printed and beautifully illustrated. Then came Shankar Nath Kaul's *Martsa pipiný ta Chhaanchhi poot* which was also liked very much. In 1961, Naji Munawar came out with his second book, this time a set of 13 poems in easy language, which was a success. Bansi Nirdosh translated the biography of Tagore, but unfortunately it didn't have the essentials of a book written specially for children.

Other writers also wrote occasionally, particularly for the weekly broadcast for children. Some of these contributions became most mentionable because of the

gifted voice and the style of narration of Pushkar Bhan. Naji Munawar came out with *Shuryen Handý Baath* (second volume) in 1972. In 1974 he published *Baata Katha* in which all the poems are about Aesop's fables, but there is no didactic tendency and the book was very well received. He also translated Iqbal's poems for children. Three other books worth mentioning are *Bharatuchi Luka Katha* (Publications Division, GOI), *Mwolulý Tajruba*, translated by Ghulam Mohammed Wani and *Okus Bokus* by Nishat Ansari in 1986.

7

Awards

Sahitya Akademi Awards

Year	Book	Author
1956	Sumran (*Poetry*)	Zinda Kaul (Masterji)
1958	Sath Sangar (*Short stories*)	Akhtar Mohi-ud-din
1961	Nauroz-i-Saba (*Poetry*)	A Rahman Rahi
1967	Lava ta Prava (*Poetry*)	Amin Kamil
1969	Kaashiri Zabaaný Hond Allaqavaad Phera (*Linguistic Study*)	Abdul Khaliq Tak Zainageri
1970	Maqualaat (*Essays*)	Mohi-ud-din Hajini
1972	Suyya (*Drama*)	Ali Mohammad Lone
1975	Gaashirý Munaar (*Essays*)	Ghulam Nabi Khayal
1976	Machaama (*Plays*)	Pushkar Bhan
1978	Be Sokh Rooth (*Poetry*)	Ghulam Rasool Santosh
1979	Partavistan (*Poetry*)	Marghoob Banihali
1981	Mansar (*Poetry*)	Moti Lal Saqi
1982	Natak Truche (*Drama*)	Motilal Kemmu
1984	Essay (*Essays*)	Mohd. Zaman Azurdah
1985	Lola Vetsaar (*Poetry*)	Ghulam Hassan Beg Arif
1986	Shihil Kul (*Poetry*)	Dina Nath Nadim
1987	Awaz-i-Dost (*Poetry*)	Ghulam Rasool Nazki
1988	Pun ta Paap (*Novel*)	Ghulam Nabi Gauhar
1989	Sheen ta Vatapod (*Novel*)	Pran Kishore
1990	Kaashur Sarmaaya (*Poetry*)	Fazil Kashmiri
1991	Achhar Tsaangý (*Poetry*)	Ghulam Nabi Tak Naazir
1992	Amaar (*Poetry*)	Shafi Shaida
1993	Kenh Nata Kenh (*Essays*)	Syed Rasool Pompur
1994	Kajý Raath (*Drama*)	Sajood Sailani

1995	Naar Hyotun Kazal Vanas (*Poetry*)	Farooq Nazki
1997	Nai Chhe Naalan (*Poetry*)	Rafiq Raaz
1998	Mahjoor Shinaasi (*Criticism*)	Mohammad Yusuf Taing
1999	Vahraat (*Poetry*)	Rashid Nazki
2000	Yath Raazdaane (*Short Stories*)	Harikrishna Kaul

1999	**Sahitya Akademi Fellowship**	Rahman Rahi

(The only Kashmiri author to get this fellowship)

Award		Author
President's Gold Medal		
1957		Rattan Lal Shant
Sovietland Nehru Award		
1968	Tolstoy's *War & Peace* (tr)	Muzaffar Azim
1970	Dina Nath Nadim	
1974	Gogol's *The Inspector General* (tr)	Som Nath Zutshi
1981	Pushkin's Poems(tr)	Ghulam Nabi Aatash
1981	Pushkin's Poems(tr)	Sham Lal Pardesi
1981	Chekov's *The Three Sisters* (tr)	Rattan Lal Shant
1986	*Bhaavath ta Alaamath* (Criticism)	Rasul Pompur
Sangeet Natak Akademi Award		
1985	*Baanda Jashan* (Folk Drama)	Mohammad Subhan Bhagat
Robe of Honour J&K Cultural Academy		
1962		Haarat Paandany'
1988		Mohammad Amin Kamil
Followship of J&K Cultural Academy		
1976		Mohi-ud-din Hajini

Padma Shri

1974	Pushkar Bhan
1974	Som Nath Sadhu
1989	Akhtar Mohi-ud-din
1989	Moti Lal Saqi
2000	Rahman Rahi

Kashmir Theatre Federation Award

1974	Best Playwright	Sajjud Sailaani
1975	Best Stage Décor	Sajjud Sailaani
1976	Best Stage Décor	Sajjud Sailaani

Kamal Theatres Award

1983	S N Sadhu Memorial Award	Sajjud Sailaani

Awards for Painting & Fine Arts

National Academy of Fine Arts	Ghulam Rasool Santosh
Bombay Governor's Award	-do-
Kashmir State Award	-do-
Kalidas Jayanti Award	-do-

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——— : *Ruhaani Falsafa* (do)

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——— : *The Best of Mahjoor* (J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages)

——— : *Dina Nath Nadim* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi)

Sadhu S.L. : *Folktales from Kashmir* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay)

Saqi, Motilal : *Gaashirý* (J & K Academy of Art, Culture & Language)

Shafi Shauq & Naji Munawar : *Kaashiri Adabuk Tavaareekh* (Kashmir University)

Sufi, GMD : *Kasheer* (University of Punjab, Lahore)

Temple, Richard C : *The Word of Lalla, the Prophetess* (University Press, Cambridge)

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حسین احمد

عجم ہنوز نداند رموز دیں ورنہ
ز دیوبند حسین احمد این چہ بوالعجبی است
سرود بر سر منبر کہ ملت از وطن است
چہ بے خبر ز مقام محمد عربی است
بمصطفیٰ برساں خویش را کہ دیں ہمہ اوست
اگر باو نرسیدی تمام بولہبی است

Last but one of ارمغان حجاز

ہم تحقیق ازل کس سے حقیقت کے نغمے کو
مضراب اسے کہتا ہے آتش کبھی موسیٰ

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* سو گئے منہ لگ چل اُن سے اے یادِ تو کے ظالم
بہتیروں کو سلایا اس کو جگا جگا کر

* یوسف عزیز دلہا جا مصر میں ہوا تھا
ذلت جو ہو وطن میں تو کوئی دن سفر کر

Kashmiri literature, with poetry as its chief mode of expression, can be said to have begun with Lal Ded, "that most manly of women seekers after God" and the other outstanding mystic, Sheikh-ul-Alam. 14th century mysticism was followed by the age of vatsun, with chang, rabaab and santoor full of the affirmation of life, with Habba Khaatoon, that incomparable votary of passion, riding the waves. The 19th century was the age of masnavis, whose heavy Persian influence dominated the theme, form, diction and metre of poetry. Their themes were mostly local tales of love and war. Side by side, bhakti and sufi poets flourished. The dawn of the modern age brought new movements, revolutionary in character, like the progressive movement, shifting the writers' worldview altogether. This was followed by disillusion and despair. The glory of the Kashmiri writer lies in his/her braving the storm. One unique thing about Kashmiri letters is the total absence of prose till 1940 (apart from the language of speech). During the last six decades it has, however, branched out into various genres like essay, criticism, history, drama and fiction — and Kashmiri literature now has a pride of place in Indian Letters.

T.N. Raina (b.1922) retired as Professor of English from the National Defence Academy. He has brought out two books of translations : *An Anthology of Modern Kashmiri Verse* (1972) and the *Best of Mahjoor* (1989). He also has, *Cradle for Leadership*, a history of the National Defence Academy of India and a monograph on *Dina Nath Nadim* published by Sahitya Akademi, to his credit.



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